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Preface

Sir William Hunter's well-known book *The Indian Empire* was published in 1881. It was revised and published in four volumes in 1907-09 under the title *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* These four volumes have now been revised and brought up-to-date. They are entitled *The Gazetteer of India: Indian Union*. The second volume — *History and Culture* was published in 1973.

Some of the chapters of this volume, namely, Government and Economic Life; Society, Religion and Literature; Arts and Architecture; Pre-Historic and Proto-Historic Periods; Early History of India upto AD 1206; and History of Medieval India (AD 1206–AD 1761) which have a wider public opinion, are being published separately in the forms of booklets. The idea is to provide to the general public, especially the university students, low-priced publications containing authentic and objective information on these subjects by well-known writers who are experts in their respective fields

There was no chapter on Government and Economic Life in the *Imperial Gazetteer*. In the revised Indian Gazetteer, there are a number of contributors to the chapter on Government and Economic Life in Ancient and Medieval India on which this booklet is based. These are U N. Ghoshal and S. K Mitra for Ancient Period and M. Mujeeb, Sukumar Ray, B. R Grover, U. N. Dey, Irfan Habib and Tapan Raychaudhuri for Medieval period. It is hoped that not only this booklet but the entire series will serve a useful purpose and meet the requirements of the general public

New Delhi
February 28, 1979

P N. Chopra
Editor (Gazetteers)

Contents

ANCIENT INDIA

1

Nature of State and Government

WHETHER THE STATE under the Sultāns of Delhi and the Mughal emperors was Islamic or not has been the subject of a lively controversy among modern historians. According to Muslim constitutional law, the world is divided into *dār-ul-harb* or 'abode of war' and *dār-ul-Islām* or 'abode of Islām', and a *dār-ul-Islām* is a country which is under the rule of a Muslim sovereign and where the ordinances of Islām have been established. The Sultāns of Delhi acknowledged the sovereignty of the Caliph and considered their kingdom as a part of *dār-ul-Islām* of which the Caliph was the juridical head. India under the Mughal emperors was governed by the Muslim law, *shar'*. The fact that the bold and daring Alāu'd-din Khaljī consulted the *Qādī* of Bayāna to ascertain what was legal proves the supremacy of the *shar'*; and neither he nor Muhammad Tughluq with his revolutionary inclinations, dared violate it. Even Akbar, the Great, considered infidel by orthodox Muslims, did not disregard Muslim law. In his letters to Abdullah Khān of Bukhara, Akbar defended himself against the charge of impiety and posed as the champion of Islām. He further claimed to have introduced Islām into many lands where it had been unknown, and referred to the conversion under his regime of the churches and temples of infidels and heretics into mosques and shrines for the faithful. The *Mahdar* (Declaration) of A.D. 1579 made Akbar the *Imām* and *Amīr-ul-Muminīn* (Commander of the Faithful) and the chief *Mujtahid* (legal authority). It recognized the *Qurān* as the fundamental law of the state Akbar, of course, based his government not only on the *shar'* but also on what Badāyunī calls *dawābil* or state-laws. His own religious policy, as well as that of his two successors, was not inspired by notions of Muslim law. However, Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān considered themselves as Muslim kings and, as such, not above Muslim law. Shāh Jahān, in fact, took some steps

towards making an Islamic state It may, therefore, be stated that the Mughal empire, excluding the period under Akbar, Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān, was an Islamic state. Even so, neither under the Delhi Sulṭāns nor under the Mughal emperors did the state conform absolutely to Islamic ordinances since it had to adapt itself to realities and expediency. According to the Muslim canon law, only the 'people of scripture' (*ahl-i-kitāb*), namely the Jews, Christians and Sabeans as well as Zoroastrians are guaranteed life, liberty and property by the Muslim state on payment of *jizyah* (poll-tax) and *kharāj* (land-tax). They are called *dhimmīs* (*ahl-i-dhimma*), while all the others are described as idolators who must be killed or enslaved. This distinction between *dhimmis* and idolators among the non-Muslim population fell apart in India. In Sind, the first Muslim conquerors—the Arabs—had to tolerate those who were not 'people of the scripture'. The Turkish and Afghān rulers of India followed their example. They had to treat the Hindus, who formed the vast majority of the population, with consideration and toleration out of sheer expediency, if not from choice or sympathy. In India, more than in any other country, the ordinances of Islam in respect of idolators were disregarded because of the existence of an overwhelming non-Muslim population who were not 'people of the scripture'. Firūz Shāh Tughluq confessed his helplessness in preventing Hindus from openly blowing their conches, beating drums and going daily to the river Yamunā by the side of his palace, to worship their idols. Even Aurangzeb found it impossible to rule absolutely according to Islamic law and had to concede to certain extra-Islamic practices of his predecessors. In fields relating to religion, the Hindus were allowed full freedom to have their cases tried by their own communal courts. Even in matters of property and several other non-religious affairs if both the parties were Hindus, the case was referred to the judgement of *pandits* or Hindu lawyers. The land-revenue system under Muslim rulers and the ceremonies and procedure at the Mughal court bear the unmistakable evidence of Indian traditions These deviations from Muslim law, however, did not affect the fundamental Islamic character of the state. Under the orthodox 'Abbāsid Caliphs', who were officially cham-

pions of the *Faith* the state betrayed predominantly Persian and Byzantine ideas, but was, nevertheless, Islamic.

The next question is whether the medieval Indian state was a theocracy. Here also the same controversy persists among scholars of today. The medieval state under Muslim rule was definitely a theocracy, since it had all its essential elements—the sovereignty of God and government by the direction of God through priests in accordance with divine laws The Sultāns of Delhi considered themselves as deputies or assistants of the Caliph who was God's viceregent. Sher Shāh and Islām Shāh assumed the title of Caliph and the Mughal emperors, from Akbar to Aurangzeb, those of 'shadow of God', 'Caliph of God', and 'agent of God on earth'. The sovereignty of God was unquestioned. The supremacy of the *shar'* was always acknowledged, though Akbar added to the *shar'* the state-laws. Under him and his two immediate successors, Islamic law ceased to be the exclusive code of government Jahāngir and Shāh Jahān, however, did not regard themselves as above Muslim law and the former even assumed the role of 'protector' of Islām and *shar'*. The *shar'* is based on the *Qurān*, the word of God, and *hadīth* or the Prophet's interpretations of the word of God. Hence, the *shar'* consists of divine commands and not human ordinances. There was no ordained priesthood in medieval India as Islām has no priesthood. There was, however, the body of *'ulamā'* which had a strong influence on the state. Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī and Muḥammed Tughluq wanted to get rid of them, but they rose to their height under Muhammad's nephew Firūz. Even a powerful ruler like Sher Shāh, who tamed the unruly nobles, found it expedient to listen to the advice of the *'ulamā'* in his dealings with Pūrana Mal of Raisen. There was a slump in their authority during Alāu'd-din's regime and even an eclipse of their power under Akbar, but they remained an influence all through the medieval period. The *'ulamā'* virtually served the function of the priestly class, though they did not form an ordained clergy or hereditary priesthood or claimed 'sacredotal immunity from error'. From the *'ulamā'* were recruited *ṣadrs*, *muftīs*, *mīr-adls*, and *qāḍīs* who interpreted the law and advised the king in all matters of administration. The state under the Muslim rulers

of India with the exception of Akbar and Jahāngīr, was, therefore, a theocracy.

This description, however, does not exhaust the points of controversy as to the nature of the state. Was the Delhi Sultanate or the Mughal empire a culture state or a police state? Some scholars think that the Sultanate of Delhi was a full-fledged culture state and it was on par with the Mughal empire. There are others who maintain that it was merely a police state. Defence, law and order and the collection of revenue were its primary concern. In other matters, it followed a policy of *laissez-faire*. Welfare of the people was not the primary concern of the Sultāns. They did not hesitate to sacrifice even the interest of their creed at the altar of their personal ambition. The people were for the state, not the state for the people. The state rendered a few benevolent functions under some of the Sulṭāns in respect of the Muslim citizens "The guiding principle of the Sultāns was benevolence; they aspired to serve and protect 'the servants of God' entrusted to their care." The non-Muslims were not treated as 'the servants of God'. The schools, colleges, hospitals, inns, caravanserais and free kitchens for the poor, established by these Sultāns catered mostly to the needs of the Muslims who formed a small minority of the population. The benevolence of even the most considerate among them, Firūz Tughluq, was confined to the Muslim community, Alāu'd-din Khaljī's healthy measures of reform were inspired by military considerations. Further, these benevolent measures were religious benefactions of the Sultāns for gaining personal merit rather than acts of state. The educational institutions subsidized by them served as academies for training *'ulamā'* for the service of the state church and did not aim primarily at educating the people. The patronage of art and literature was for the personal satisfaction of the Sultāns and not for the promotion of national culture. The Sultanate of Delhi, which could not control the provincial administration and make the state an organic whole by devising well-ordered provincial and local government, was not in a position to undertake responsibility for the multifarious aspects of the people's life—social, moral, economic and cultural. These were left to the communities themselves. Even the administration of the vast rural areas was the concern of the village councils. The state

intervened only in cases of violent crime or rebellion against the king. This is not to say that the state followed absolute *laissez-faire* out of respect for village self-government. It did so because it was too weak to shoulder the burden of administering such a vast area. Not only was the Sultanate weak as a state, but it could not also extend toleration to the majority of its subjects. Toleration under the Sultāns was the exception rather than the rule. Apart from Zainul-Ābidīn of Kashmīr (A.D. 1420-1470), Sher Shāh was the first Muslim ruler who followed the policy of toleration. He expanded the scope of state activity because of his realization that the function of the government was not merely policing and revenue collection but also the welfare of the people. His reign was, however, too short for the translation of his ideas into action. The Sultanate could never have the will to undertake benevolent measures for the children of the soil, the preponderant majority of whom were non-Muslims. It could not, therefore, rise above the stature of a law or police state.

When we come to the Mughal empire, which properly begins with Akbar, we stand on a different ground. Toleration and benevolence were the guiding principles of Akbar's government; and he gave a new orientation to the conception of the state in medieval India. Akbar considered his subjects as his children and hence held himself responsible for their welfare. According to Abū'l Faḍl, 'royalty is a light emanating from God, *farr-i-īzidī* (the divine light) and many excellent qualities flow from the possession of this light.' Among them are 'a paternal love towards the subjects' and 'a large heart'. The state, as conceived by Abū'l Faḍl and established by Akbar, was universal including all human beings irrespective of sect, creed or nationality. Unlike the Islamic state, it was not confined to any particular class and was based on the principle of 'peace with all' (*Ṣulḥ-i-kul*). Abū'l Faḍl's king was just, wise, enlightened, shepherd of his people, father to his subjects, and protector of the weak. He was, above all else, cherisher of every sect and creed. 'And with all these notes of perfection, he (the king) cannot be fit for his lofty office, if he does not inaugurate universal peace (toleration) and if he does not regard all conditions of humanity and all sects of religion with the single eye of favour—not be-mother some and be-stepmother

others—he will not become fit for the exalted dignity.' Akbar followed this ideal and based his state on it. He himself expressed this feeling in his letter to Abdullah Khān of Bukhara. 'All this autocracy and world-rule, all this sword-bearing and clime-conquering are for the purpose of shepherding and for doing the work of watch and ward; not for the amassing of treasures of gold and silver or for decorating the throne and diadem.' 'Divine worship in monarchs', according to Akbar, 'consists in their justice and good administration'. Shāh Jahān also considered the well-being of his subjects and the protection of the weak as the duties of the monarch. If there was any period when the Mughal empire could rise to the stature of a culture state, it was definitely under Akbar. It did away with discrimination between the ruler and the ruled, between Muslims and Hindus, abolished the pilgrim tax on the Hindus and the *jizyah*, and undertook some social and moral reforms, restricting the use of wine and gambling, abolishing forced *satī* or burning of widows and compulsory widowhood, and discouraging child marriage and polygamy.

But in spite of Akbar's benevolent and enlightened policy and its partial continuation by Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān, the Mughal rule had but limited scope in its functions. It did not undertake programmes for the benefit of the people as modern governments do. It did not concern itself with education, health, public works, and the moral, social and economic life of the people, while village life was outside its scope unless there was rebellion against the king or violent crime. This was not due so much to 'respect for the immemorial village autonomy', as to the policy of *laissez-faire* which the state had to follow since it found itself unequal to the burden of undertaking responsibility for the vast rural areas. The Mughal government collected the bulk of land revenue through *jāgīrdārs* and maintained the vital position of the army through *manṣabdārs*. The state did not directly bear these burdens and naturally left the villages to themselves. The various functions of a socialistic character were left to the communities or to private enterprise. Of course, as head of both the church and state for the Muslims, the emperor undertook certain socialistic functions on their behalf, such as education and charities which were the responsibility of the *Ṣadr's* department. Certain social functions

were rendered by the *Kotwāl,* and the *Moḥtasib* looked after the moral aspect. But, for the vast majority of the people who were non-Muslims, these activities were left to the community or to society. Nevertheless, it is difficult to agree with the view that 'the aim of the (Mughal) government was extremely limited, materialistic and sordid'. Sordid is not the right word to use. From Sher Shāh to Shāh Jahān, we have rulers whose policy can hardly be described as sordid. They were, indeed, benevolent monarchs. They founded schools and colleges and provided endowments for their maintenance Sher Shāh's *madrasah* at Nārnaul and Humāyūn's at Delhi, Abū'l Fadl's college at Fatehpur Sīkri and Akbar's at Āgra, and Shāh Jahān's *madrasah* near Jāmi' Masjid at Delhi are only a few notable examples Jahāngīr also ordered the erection of several schools. Akbar made improvements in the curricula and in the scheme of education for Hindus as well as Muslims with bias in favour of secular education. Jahāngīr abolished the barbarous practice of making eunuchs in Bengal and enforced some of the social reforms of his father. The Mughal emperors also undertook a number of public works, such as wells, tanks, canals, baths, dams, bridges, *serāis,* public kitchens, hospitals, etc. Jahāngīr ordered the erection of rest-houses and hospitals with attending physicians. The *Mirāt-i-Aḥmadī* refers to hospitals established by the central government for the treatment of the rich and the poor with both *yūnānī* and *āyurvedic* physicians on the staff. Akbar established stores of food grains and free kitchens and alms houses at various centres as permanent measures of poverty relief and famine insurance. His successors did not maintain such regular department. But, during Shāh Jahān's reign, when several famines occurred, he made the best efforts for providing relief, though they proved inadequate. All these activities stemmed obviously from the personal benevolence of the monarchs and were neither regular nor well-planned since they did not issue from the regular mechanism of the state.

The munificent patronage of arts and letters by the Mughal emperors and the marvellous efflorescence of Indo-Muslim culture at their courts do not make the Mughal empire a culture state. These were the personal activities of the emperors concerned and were rooted in their elegant tastes and refined pleasure. They

did not primarily aim at the intellectual progress of the country. On occasions, as under Shāh Jahān when the empire was struck by severe famines, the enormous expenditure for the construction of his magnificent edifices involving extensive employment of unpaid labour must have led to huge exploitation and untold misery for the people. A culture state could not enjoy this luxury while the country was being bled. A dispassionate study does not make us share the zeal of Jahāngīr's historian when he calls the Mughal empire a culture state. However, it was undoubtedly a great advance on the *laissez-faire* police-state of the Sultāns of Delhi and an approach towards a culture state.

Was the medieval state a *Kriegstaat*? The main prop of the Muslim rulers who were foreigners in India, was undoubtedly their army. The Sultāns of Delhi as well as the Mughal emperors emphasized the importance of military force. Under 'Alāu'd-din Khaljī, the military objectives decided his policy and actions. This does not mean that the Sultanate was primarily a military state. The military department was separate from other departments of the state both at the centre and in the provinces. The provincial governor and the provincial *'Ariḍ* were independent of one another and accountable only to their respective heads at the centre It would be incorrect to say that the mainspring of the Sultanate was military force and its chief function was that of recruiting soldiers and employing them to keep the people under subjection.

The *manṣab* system of the Mughals has misled some to think that the Mughal government was military in character. The basis of the public service system was military and even the status and salary were regulated and controlled by military standards and regulations This did not affect the efficiency of the civil administration or the interests of the people and in no way did it involve the subordination of the civil to the military interest. Further, the entire range of public services was not based on military organization, the lower officers of the various departments holding no *manṣab* and getting their salary in cash Likewise, the fact that the provincial governor was called *Sipāh-sālār* has led some to believe that the provincial government too was military in character. In reality, the executive and judicial powers of the

governor were limited and he had to work under a series of checks and restraints He had no power or control over the finance department, whose head, the *Dīwān*, was independent and enjoyed parallel authority. The Mughal state was by no means a *Kriegstaat*. It has been said that while every state possesses an army, in Prussia the army possessed the state. This would not at all be true of either the Delhi Sultanate or the Mughal empire.

The form of government was a monarchy which passed through different stages of evolution: Iltutmish, Balban, Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī, Sher Shāh and Akbar, each marks a definite step. Iltutmish laid the foundation of the monarchy, Balban and Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī consolidated it, the Tughluqs weakened it, the Lodīs degraded it, the Sūrīs revived it and Akbar restored it to full vigour In its initial stages, the kingship was elective, with no fixed law of succession; the prominent among the nobility formed the electoral body and force finally determined the issue. It became hereditary in the sense that it was confined to the royal family. Of the many rulers of the various dynasties during this period, (A.D. 1206-1526), only a few such as Balban, Kaiqubād and Sikandar Lodī succeeded unchallenged and peacefully to the throne. Consequently, no law of succession could develop. Election, birth and royal nomination clashed with one another and ultimately yielded to force. This position continued under the Mughals even when monarchy became hereditary. The absence of the system of primogeniture bred ambition for the throne in all the princes and led to premature rebellion and wars of succession.

The king was an autocrat: he was the head of all branches of the government and there was no check on his authority. It fact, under the weaker Sultāns, the nobility and the *'ulamā'* exercised powerful checks on the authority of the king. The nobility was a major factor all through this period: it was only a Balban or an 'Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī who could make the nobles subservient to the crown. Otherwise, they held much power in the state. Under the Lodīs, when the monarchy was at its lowest ebb and the monarch was only *primus inter pares*, they were the real power. Ibrāhīm lost his throne because he alienated them by his attempt to play the monarch The nobility was quite powerful under Bābur and Humāyūn. Sher Shāh and Islam Shah forced

the Afghān nobles into submission, while Akbar finally converted the nobility into a loyal but powerful instrument of royal absolutism.

The *'ulamā'* also exercised effective check on royal power, though during the days of its weakness the state often allied itself with them. Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī ignored them in matters of state and Muḥammad Tughluq followed the same policy. It was not until Akbar assumed the headship of both church and state by virtue of the *Mahḍar* (Declaration) of A.D. 1579 that the power of the *'ulamā'* was finally broken. They, however, raised their voice again under Jahāngīr and regained their position to a certain extent under Shāh Jahān. Under Aurangzeb, they rose to dizzy height of power.

A further check on the monarch's authority was judicial and external. The Sulṭāns of Delhi acknowledged the legal sovereignty of the Caliph. According to Muslim political jurisprudence, no Sultān had legal right to the throne unless he was recognized by the Caliph Iltumish received the Caliph's envoy at Delhi and had himself recognized as Sultān. He was content to look upon himself as the Caliph's deputy. Even when the Caliphate came to an end in A D. 1258, the Sultāns of Delhi upto Jalālu'd-dīn Firūz Khaljī (A.D. 1290-1296) continued to strike coins and read the *Khuṭba* in the name of the dead Caliph Musta'sim. The succeeding Sultāns, excepting 'Alāu'd-dīn's profligate son Mubārak who himself assumed the title of Caliph, paid homage to a nameless Caliph and mentioned him on the coins and in the *Khuṭba*. 'Alāud dīn Khaljī assumed the title of 'right hand of the Caliphate'. Muhammad and Firūz Tughluq received envoys from the 'Abbāsid Caliphs of Cairo and owed allegiance to them. The later Sulṭāns of Delhi continued this tradition of acknowledging the supremacy of a nameless Caliph. The Mughal emperors came with the different conception of being the Caliph in their own country. Sher Shāh and Islām Shāh seized the tradition and assumed the title. When Sīdī 'Alī R'aīs, the Turkish admiral, pointed out to Humāyūn that no king had the right to rule without his master's sanction, he must have ignored it with supreme indifference. The claim of caliphal supremacy over the Mughal empire was finally overthrown when Akbar assumed the title of *Imām* and *Amīr-ul-*

muminīn by virtue of the *Maḥdar* (Declaration) of A.D. 1579. The coins and the *Khutba* mention him as Caliph and *Amir-ul-muminīn*. By becoming the chief *mujtahid*, he also challenged the pretensions of the Safavī Shāhs of Persia who claimed suzerainty over the Mughal empire, on the ground that both Bābur and Humāyūn had sought and obtained their military help. It was under Akbar that the monarchy in India became absolutely independent of any foreign or external authority. His successors maintained this tradition. The Mughal emperors from the time of Akbar assumed the authority of the Caliph and called their capital *dāru'l-khilāfat*

The king was not only an autocrat but he was also invested with 'the divinity that doth hedge a king'. Both Muslim and Hindu traditions made the monarch a divine agent. Balban took the title of 'shadow of God' (*zill-i-allah*) and cast a halo of superiority on the monarchical office. Amīr Khusraw and Baranī called Alāu'd-dīn the 'shadow of God on earth'. Muhammad Tughluq's coins describe him as 'Sultān, shadow God'. The Mughal emperors came with the tradition of divinity of monarchs, which obtained among the Mongols and Turks. Humāyūn was described by the historian Khwāndamīr as the 'shadow of God' and personification of the spiritual and temporal sovereignty. Sher Shāh also believed that he had directives from God and styled himself *Khuld Allah Khilāfāthū*. Islām Shāh outdid Balban who insisted on *zamīnbūs* and *qadambūs* (kissing the ground and kissing the foot) and made his nobles show respect to his slippers. He thus prepared the ground for the divine-right monarchy of the Mughals. Akbar was not only the shadow and Caliph of God, but he also ruled by divine right as God's elect and considered kingship as a gift of God. According to Abū'l Faḍl, 'royalty is a light emanating from God and a ray from the Sun' and that Akbar possessed this light. Akbar himself said· 'We, by nature of our being the shadow of God, receive little and give much'. 'The very sight of kings has been held to be a part of divine worship To behold them is a means of calling to mind the Creator and suggests the protection of the Almighty Jahāngīr also considered kingship as a gift of God: 'The Just Creator bestows acts of sovereignty and world-rule on whom he considers

fit for this glorious and exalted duty'. Shāh Jahān called himself 'shadow of God' in his *farmān* to Ādil Shāh. Aurangzeb referred to himself as the agent (*wakīl*) of God on earth. The monarchy of the Mughals was indeed 'a divine inheritance' and not 'a human compromise'.

Thus, under Akbar, the structure of Muslim monarchy reached culmination as absolute, unrestrained, sacrosanct and divine, above all classes and independent of any external authority, perfectly sovereign besides being enlightened and benevolent. Inspite of the Islamic theory of kingship being democratic and constitutional, monarchy in India could not rise above the level of benevolent despotism

The Delhi Sultanate was in theory a unitary government, but it was actually a confederation of semi-independent territorial units ruled by military chiefs as governors. The control of the central government over these units or provinces was loose, shadowy and vague. There was hardly more than nominal allegiance of the governors to the centre. The main obligations were payment of tribute or revenue and supply of soldiers in war-time. They exercised full liberty of policy and action in their internal administration. Balban and Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī made effective attempts at establishing the centre's control over the provincial and local governments. Under the Tughluqs, however, the central government became weaker and the Lodīs virtually abdicated their authority. The Afghān polity was a grouping of tribal chieftains and the kingdom was to be divided among the nobles, and the tribal chiefs. Under such a polity, the authority of the provincial and local administration vastly increased at the expense of the centre. It was Sher Shāh who for the first time attempted successfully to establish provincial administration in the proper sense of the term. He defined the territorial limits of the provinces and regulated and controlled the powers and functions of the provincial and local administrations. Sher Shāh's work was completed by Akbar, under whom the provincial and local administration became an integral part of the central government, subject to its full control. The government of the Mughals was an effective unitary organization.

Neither the government of the Delhi Sultanate nor that of the

Mughal empire was feudalistic. Both the governments were organised bureaucracies with regular gradations of departments and officers. The officers were appointed, transferred and dismissed by the monarch at his will and were accountable to him and the higher authorities. No office, civil or military, was hereditary and there was no sub-infeudation The *jāgīr* and *manṣab* systems have misled some to believe that Muslim government in India was feudalistic. The *jāgīr* system was not based upon feudalism as it lacked two fundamental or major elements of feudalism—hereditariness and sub-infeudation. The *jāgīrdār* was an officer of the state as collector of the revenue of his *jāgīr* land which he realized on behalf of the state with a view to obtaining his salary. He had no administrative control over the land beyond revenue collection and he had no right to grant it to anybody under him. After his death, the *jāgīr* was not necessarily inherited by his successor It could be resumed by the state. Similarly, the *manṣab* system was based upon the organization of the public services of the empire A *manṣab* was personal and not hereditary and there could be no sub-infeudation in respect of the *manṣab*. Even the wealth and property of a *manṣabdār* reverted to the state by escheat after his death. This absence of a feudal organization with its principles of rights and obligations, privileges and duties deprived the government of a force which could serve as a healthy check on royal absolutism. Medieval India had no system of independent hereditary peerage. Under the Delhi Sultāns the nobles were an influence in the state, while under the Mughals, they were the main prop of the government. An aristocracy created by and dependent on the will of the sovereign, instead of checking his autocracy and acting as a barrier between the emperor and the people, contributed strength to his pretensions A peerage that could win *Magna Carta* from John, the King of England, was impossible under such a system. It is interesting to find that though the Mughals did not recognise women's right to sovereignty, the harem became an influence in the state during their rule

Medieval government was thus a composite structure — a fusion of Perso-Arabic, Turko-Mongol (Central Asian) and Indian elements. The central and provincial governments and the fiscal

system excluding land-revenue were based on the Perso-Arabic system. The army administration was based on the Central Asian model The principles of government, the church policy, the departmental arrangements and the very titles of the officers were derived from outside India, mainly from Arabia and Persia. The land-revenue system was, however, predominantly Indian and there were Indian elements in the judicial system as well. The very conception of monarchy as it finally developed under the Mughals betrayed Indian influence.

Hindu Kingdoms

The nature of the state in the Hindu kingdoms of the medieval ages may as well be briefly reviewed. Out of the fragments of the Coḷa and Cālukya empires which ended about the beginning of the 13th century, four kingdoms emerged—the Kākatīya, Yādava, Hoysala and Pāṇḍya. The prevailing form of government was hereditary monarchy. The king was the supreme head of the state and pivot of the administrative machinery. He was not, however, an unfettered autocrat, but was at every step restricted and regulated by the injunctions of *Dharma* It may, however, be noted that the ancient Vedic concept of Ārya *Dharma* had undergone far-reaching changes, both in content and ideology, in the medieval ages owing to the dominating influence of the neo-Brahmanical society. It mainly represented the unquestioned ascendancy of the priestly class and complete loss of freedom of thought and action by the laity people Thus the *Dharma* which the king had to uphold was mainly *Varṇāśrama Dharma*, the greatest stress being on the numerous obligations of the Hindus towards the members of the priestly class. The law conferred on the latter exceptional privileges and legal immunities not enjoyed by any other section. The king's chief duty was to enforce the observance by each caste of its particular *Dharma*.

Like all medieval Hindu states, the Vijayanagar empire was a monarchy with the only exception that the law of heredity was not strictly adhered to. The monarch frequently exercised the right of nominating the successor, although he usually nominated his son or brother as *Yuvarāja*. This practice was the result of

the peculiarly perilous situation in which the empire was placed owing to the unceasing hostility of its neighbouring Muslim kingdoms on the one hand and the intransigence of its feudatories on the other. Yet, the concept of *Dharma* as the sanction behind the restraint on the actions and policies of the king remained unquestioned. The king was bound to obey the laws of the Dharmaśāstras and the accepted conventions, customs and practices of society.

The Rājpūt kingdoms, during the medieval ages, were based upon the clannish order. The revenue assignments were made to those who were connected with the royal family with clannish ties and at the same time undertook to supply military contingents to the army of the ruler. In theory, the state was governed by the ancient concept of the Hindu Dharmaśāstras. During the Mughal age, the Rājpūt chiefs (named as *Zamīndārān-i-umda*) were by and large enrolled as the *mansabdārs* in the Mughal administration. They held hereditary *watan Jāgīr* as well as *tankhwah jāgīr*, i.e. revenue assignment in lieu of their salaries for rendering active service to the Mughal state. However, they had the right to make religious grants in their territories and they had also the right to administer justice

The Marāṭhā state in the Deccan was formally founded by Śivājī in June A.D. 1674 The coronation of Śivājī was performed perfectly in accordance with the ceremonial prescribed in the Dharmaśāstras. Like any Hindu king, Śivājī was fully subordinate to the demands and dictates of *Dharma*. His insistence on Sanskrit nomenclature and titles is reminiscent of the ancient Hindu polity. A complete revival of ancient administrative practices was, however, not possible. Śivājī continued the existing customs and practices to a considerable extent. In theory, therefore, it may be characterized as a limited and enlightened monarchy which made no discrimination between man and man on the basis of his faith or class.

Besides land revenue, other substantial sources of state income were war-booty, *chauth* and *sardeshmukhī*. Śivājī deliberately plundered the property of his opponents in order to replenish his own coffers on the one hand and weaken the adversary on the other. *Chauth*, that is to say, one-fourth of the land revenue

to be collected from any region, was for the first time demanded by Śivājī at the time of the Treaty of Purandar made with Mirzā Rājā Jai Singh in A.D. 1665. In return for its payment, the region was to be protected and spared from depradations. *Sardeshmukhī* was an old right, equal to one-tenth of the revenue, due to be paid to the *deshmukhs* who, under the Qutb Shāhīs, were revenue collectors. Śivājī also asserted this right along with *chauth* on lands which were outside the territories included in his kingdom. These were called *Swarāj*, while the lands outside it were named *Mughlai*. No perceptible change was found to be necessary in the prevailing system of justice, most of which was disposed of by village *Pañcāyats*. The policing of the countryside was made the responsibility of the *Paṭel* and the *Pañcāyats* as before, thus making the work of the central government lighter.

Śivājī's successors relied more on their counsellors. During Sāhū's reign, the Peśwā or Chief Minister became the hereditary leading chief. The other chiefs subject to the Marāṭhā authority became the hereditary *jāgīrdārs*. They had a free hand in the management of their *jāgīrs*, but they had to contribute military contingents to the common Marāṭhā army. The Peśwā continued to wield supreme authority till 1818 The position was rather peculiar. The Rājā of Sātāra was the nominal head of the state, but he regarded himself as the vassal of the Mughal emperor who was himself a titular head. The Marāthā state, in actual practice, came to comprise big and small autonomous chieftainships rather than an empire directed by one sovereign authority However, it remained secular in concept as the religious grants even in the conquered Mughal territories were continued on the basis of *status quo* regardless of the religious communities.

2

Administrative Organization

THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION set up by the Turkish conquerors, who established their rule over northern India in the beginning of the 13th century, was a composite structure. It represented a combination of elements drawn from indigenous as well as foreign sources. The actual performance of the Sulṭāns was not in tune with their loud professions of loyalty to the *Sharī'ah* and the injunctions of the Prophet. Religious obligations had to yield invariably to the demands of political expediency and personal ambition. The ancient local institutions, such as village and caste councils, were discreetly allowed to continue. On these, the Sultāns superimposed new institutions and laws imported from abroad, such as the method of succession and the system of taxation. These, too, were not in conformity with the laws of the *Faith*.

Descended from Turkish stock, the Sultāns had imbibed the Persian traditions of monarchy. Their armies, on the other hand, continued to be modelled on the Turko-Mongol system. Below this super structure was the deep-rooted indigenous village system. It was tacitly allowed to continue its work of assisting the administration at the base without which the super structure was sure to topple.

In the first century and a half of their rule, some able and powerful Sultāns strove with much zeal and earnestness to build up a sound machinery of administration. Their racial vanity and sectarian outloook, however, never let them attain the higher and nobler human ideals of government. Their political concepts were rendered useless by a static creed which never permitted them to concede to the mass of the people the equality and liberty enjoyed by the Muslims. They always remained in a state of *jihād* (holy war) in the cause of Islām and of the Muslim brotherhood. In point of fact the outlook of the Mamlūk Turks was exceedingly

narrow and communal. They regarded the kingdom as the patrimony of the small group of Tāzik alone and jealously preserved their monopoly of all high and profitable offices. Even the Indian Muslims were treated with scorn as mean and low-born. The vaunted social—much less political—democracy of Islām, even within the Islamic community itself, never found favour with them. In such circumstances, how could the large majority of the Hindus ever hope to hold any position of honour or respectability? As for the revenues and other resources of the kingdom, by the very logic of the prevalent political ideas and ideals, they were meant for the use and enjoyment of the ruling party. If ever, any public works like canals and gardens were laid out, they were confined to certain favourite localities and were the product of personal whim or administrative need. Nothing was ever planned on a country-wide scale primarily for public benefit or the welfare of the masses. The constructive measures of men like Sultān Ghiyāshu'd-dīn Tughluq were undertaken to save the government from complete economic collapse to the brink of which it had been carried by the senseless and ruinous policies of 'Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī. With the exception of a couple of seminaries in the capital towns imparting theological teaching to Muslims or a hospital here and there, all social services were left to private charity and initiative. Apart from the splendour and luxuries of the courts and the nobility, the bulk of the state revenue was spent either on wars or royal edifices, such as mosques and tombs. The idea was that the government was not for the people but the people were for the government. The Turko-Afghān rule remained, all through, a rule of the camp. It never became a civil system of administration.

At the apex of the administrative pyramid was the Sultān with his pretensions as the deputy (*nāib*) of God. His authority was limited only theoretically by the *Sharī'ah.* No human agency could dispute or question it In actual practice, the Sulṭān was restrained by the advice of ministers, the opposition of the theologians, or the threat of revolt. The Sultān was the maker of the administrative law which consisted of his ordinances and regulations. The functions and duties assigned to the Muslim rulers by

the *Sharī'ah,* as interpreted by Muslim jurists, were observed more in the breach than in their performance.

The Chief Minister, who was called the *Wazīr,* acquired unlimited power under weak or young and inexperienced Sulṭāns. The *Wazīr* had generally to supervise all affairs of the government. He exercised particular control over the financial department. Next to him in the finance ministry were the *Mushrif-i-mamālik* (accountant-general) and the *Mustaufī-i-mamālık* (auditor-general). Originally, the *Mushrif* maintained the account of receipts and disbursements, and *Mustaufī* audited them. Under Firūz Tughluq, the *Mushrif* was put incharge of receipts and the *Mustaufī* of expenditure. There was, of course, a large staff to assist the *Mushrīf* and *Mustaufī* headed, respectively, by a *Nāzir* and *Waqūf.* The department of the *Wazīr* was called *Dīwān-i-wazārat.*

There were three other ministries, and these were said to be the main pillars of the vault of the state: the *Dīwān-i-risālat* headed by the *Ṣadr-us-sudūr* (chief *Ṣadr*) who looked after religious affairs and charities, etc. The chief *Ṣadr* generally held the office of *Qādī-i-mamālik* (chief *Qāḍī*) also, and in this capacity he controlled the department of justice. The *Dīwān-i-'arḍ* headed by the *Arīd-i-mamālik,* controlled the military department and, with the assistance of provincial and local officers, recruited and managed the army. The *Dīwān-i-inshā,* which dealt with state correspondence, was under the *Dabīr-i-khās.* He was assisted by a large staff of competent and reliable writers. All important correspondence with other states as well as provincial heads was carried on by this ministry.

Besides the above four chief ministries, there was an important department headed by the *Barīd-i-mamālik,* which functioned as the intelligence branch of the government. Through a network of local *barīds,* it kept the centre informed of happenings in all the parts of the realm. After Iltutmish, some very ambitious ministers forced young and inexperienced Sultāns like Muizu'd-dīn Bahrām to appoint them to the high office of *Nāib-i-mamālik* (Deputy-king) This practice became well established and eventually led not only to the *de facto* assertion by the *Nāib* of all kingly authority, but also to the actual usurpation of the throne. The most glaring example of this is to be seen in the action

taken by Balban. Subsequently, *Nāibs* were appointed by Alāu'd-din and Mubārak Khaljī, but after them the practice was discontinued.

The chief source of income of the state was land revenue. Under the Sultāns, this came to be known as *kharāj*. The term originally signified all taxes including *jizyah* raised from the non-Muslims, who were called *kharāj guzārs*. The amount of land revenue was raised from the earlier one-sixth or less to at least one-third of the gross produce. This was further raised by Alāu'd-din Khaljī to the maximum legal limit of one-half or 50 per cent of the gross produce. After his death, this practice was discontinued and the original incidence of the state share was restored. On lands held by Muslims, *'ushrah* or one-tenth only was levied in the beginning. However, if *'ushrī* land was purchased by a non-Muslim, it became *kharājī*. Later, *kharājī* lands, even when acquired by Muslims, were ordered to remain *kharājī* because their conversion to *'ushrī* involved much loss of revenue to the state.

Other sources of income were *jizyah,* a sort of capitation tax levied upon every adult Hindu male with independent means of maintenance; *zakāt,* a tax raised from well-to-do Muslims for sake of helping needy Muslims ; *khams* or *ghanīmiah,* the booty taken in war ; transit and octroi duties, mines, forests, treasure trove (*dafīnah*) and heirless property. The *jizyah* was a means of inflicting on the Hindu *dhimmī* not only a financial burden but also a sense of humiliation.

The main branch of the army was the cavalry, which was deployed in accordance with the demands of the situation in different parts of the kingdom. Constant vigilance had to be kept up for the security of the frontiers. For this purpose, a series of garrison posts and fortresses were either repaired or newly constructed on the marches. The infantry comprised of a numerous crowd of people, who were put to all sorts of menial jobs to serve and assist the cavalry. Some sort of rudimentary firearms such as combustible naphtha and rockets were used, especially during sieges. The elephant corps was an important branch of the army and was meant to serve as mounts for the chiefs or to pull heavy loads. The sources of supply for the army were the

banjārās and local stores, supplemented with the plunder of the country around, if necessary.

Judiciary and police were placed under the chief *Ṣadr* and chief *Qāḍī*, both offices being held usually by the same person. The Sulṭān was the final court of appeal. In due course, a hierarchy of *Qāḍīs* was established to dispose of cases of civil disputes and criminal complaints. In civil disputes between Hindus, Hindu customary law appears to have been applied. There was a separate judiciary for the army, under a *Qāḍī-i-'askar*. The *Moḥtasib* inspected the religious and civic behaviour of Muslims. The policing of the cities and towns was entrusted to *Kotwāls* and of the countryside to *Faujdārs*.

The whole kingdom was divided into provinces. Most of them, especially the distant ones, were almost autonomous, owning only a nominal allegiance to the Sultān and even withholding tribute frequently. The governors (*Walīs* or *Muftīs*) were enjoined to collect revenue and propagate the Faith. With the passage of time, they could not but be influenced by their environment and many of them showed a conspicuous spirit of tolerance and constructive ability. The provinces were sub-divided into *shiqs* and *parganas*, which were under the charge of *Shiqqdārs* and *'Āmils* or *Mushrifs*. The *pargana* was the smallest unit of administration.

Suris

Sher Shāh does not seem to have had ministers—they are not mentioned by any chronicler—he had only secretaries to execute his orders concerning the business of all departments of government. Towards the close of his reign, Sher Shāh's kingdom extended from Sonārgaon in the east to the border of the Gakkhar country and Sind in the west, and as far as Mewār and Chitor in Rājputāna, touching the fringe of the blue mountain. His northern boundary touched the fringes of the Himālayan range, and, in the south, he pushed his possessions as far as the Vindhyas.

Sher Shāh evidently rationalised the old provincial boundaries and re-adjusted them only where necessary. The following twelve provinces are definitely mentioned by contemporary writers:

Bengal, Bihār, Avadh, Rohilkhand, Āgra, Delhi, Lahore, Multān, Sind, Jodhpur, Chitor and Mālwa. To the province of Bengal, in view of its distance and propensity to revolt, special attention had to be paid. It was divided into a number of smaller units, which may be called sub-provinces, independent of each other, but under the overall supervision and direction of an *Amīn* or trustee.

The provinces (*ṣūbahs*) were divided into *sarkārs* and these further into *parganas*. Within the *parganas*, the ancient village councils (*Pañcāyats*), with their headmen continued to function under the aegis of the government. The *sarkār* seems to have had three main officers; *Faujdār, Shiqqdār-i-sarkār, Kotwāl* and *'Āmil*. The *Faujdār* was a semi-military police officer charged with the maintenance of law and order. The *Shiqqdār* was the chief executive of the *pargana*. He was assisted by the *'Amal-guzār* (*'Āmil*) in the assessment and realisation of the revenue. The *Kotwāl* was head of the police and as also criminal magistrate.

Sher Shāh revived and regulated the system of survey or measurement (*ḍabt*) wherever it was possible throughout his kingdom. The assessment of land revenue was based on the measurement of land. There were two other systems of assessment: *ghallahbakhshī* or *baṭāī*, i.e., a simple division of crops; and *kankūt*, meaning assessment by a general estimate made by the revenue officer of the government assisted by the headman of the village in the presence of the cultivator. These two systems were in force wherever conditions for *ḍabṭ* were not favourable. The share of the government revenue was fixed at one-third of the gross yield, the only exception being the province of Multān where, due to the undeveloped conditions, only one-fourth of the yield was levied. As for the mode or form of payment, the peasant had the option to pay in cash or kind in case of hard crops only. The *'Āmil* assisted the *Shiqqdār* in preserving law and order. Another important officer of the *pargana* was the *Fotadār* or *Khizānadār* who was in charge of the treasury.

With regard to the army, Sher Shāh's first step on his assumption of power was to remove a basic weakness by introducing a number of reforms in the service regulations as well as in the method of recruitment of both soldiers and horses. They were

subjected to a test before being employed. Every horse had to be branded (*dāgh*) and its descriptive roll prepared to prevent fraudulent practices by the soldiers. At regular intervals, a muster roll of the army was held and systematic inspection carried out. Payment of salaries was made in cash and the system of *jāgīrs* was discontinued.

Sher Shāh made allotments of revenue to different departments on a rational basis. The military expenditure was high as there were constant wars and campaigns and an efficient and well-equipped army had to be maintained. Even so, due to his high financial acumen, he could spare a substantial amount for his intensive public works and other services for the general welfare of all his subjects. At the same time he relieved them considerably from the burden of the various local *abwāb* (cesses), which were strictly forbidden. Apart from these measures, it is notable that charitable endowments as also grants to educational institutions and stipends to scholars were liberally made. It may be justly presumed that Sher Shāh exercised strict economy in his household expenditure and privy-purse. There is no evidence that he maintained a large harem, as was customary with the monarchs of the time. A very efficient postal service was established and, for the first time, it was made available for public use. There were two kinds of postal conveyance—a relay of foot-runners and horse-carriages for carrying heavier loads.

Mughals

By the time the Mughals arrived on the political scene of northern India, a far reaching change had come about in the concept of monarchy, both in theory and practice. The Caliph had long been dead and was all but forgotten. Every great Muslim ruler assumed the role of Caliph in his own right for all practical purposes. However, some shadowy recognition of the authority of the early Caliph was still retained by the Mughals through the practice of inscribing the names of the first four Caliphs on their seals and coins. This served the purpose of keeping alive the delusion that they were still following the Islamic law. The question of departures from that law was conveniently ignored.

Akbar stands in splendid stature, intellectually and culturally, amidst the pygmies who preceded and followed him. His genius and breadth of vision imparted Islām and the Muslim state with a new all inclusiveness. All men, without distinction of faith or complexion, found welcome under the sheltering wings of the state. Akbar believed that the Islamic law warranted progressive adjustment in accordance with the growing needs of an ever-changing society. He broadened the basis and concept of Islamic polity from a communal to a universal theocracy. His contemporaries and even his successors failed to comprehend the profound significance of the change.

The king was the fountain-head of all authority, executive, judiciary, civil and military. He was also the final judge in religious matters where opinions among the legists differed. It should not, however, be inferred that the Mughal emperor was an unlimited autocrat. The force of public sentiments and view-points, as expressed through the ministers and high dignitaries of the court, the obligation imposed by time-honoured customs and traditions of society, the need for the support and co-operation of the leading sections of the people, and above all, the ruler's own concern for the well-being of the people exercised a great restraining and guiding influence on the policies of the monarch. The ruler's popularity and the stability of the government depended on the extent to which the above factors were kept in view or disregarded by the emperors. An extreme case of utter disregard of these considerations was that of Aurangzeb. In spite of his great ability and industry, he precipitated the ruin and disintegration of the Mughal empire. The cultural and social traditions initiated and nurtured by Akbar had gone so deep into the soil and had given rise to such a composite society, as much on the administrative level as on the popular, that it was impossible for any one to roll back the tide of history and undo the progress achieved. The general tone of the government, therefore, as set by Akbar, refused to yield to reactionary policies and pressures. On the whole, it continued to be an enlightened despotism.

The machinery of the government, which had started to disintegrate under the earlier chaotic conditions, was soon renovated

and set in order. The government took up its obligations, constituent as well as ministrant. Peace and security of life and property were restored, the judiciary reorganised, and facilities for economic growth assured. Positive steps were taken to provide education, medical relief and other social services. Above all, legal and civic equality was extended to all men and encouragement given not for material progress alone but also for cultural and intellectual and even spiritual endeavour.

Akbar's ministry comprised four members. 1. *Wakīl* (Prime Minister), who later on came to be called *Wazīr;* 2. *Wazīr* (Finance Minister), later known as *Dīwān;* 3. *Mīr Bakhshī,* Minister in charge of army and general administrator of royal establishments; and 4. *Ṣadr-us-sudūr* (in-charge of religion and charities, etc.). Usually, the office of the chief *Qāḍī* was combined with that of *Ṣadr.* Next to the four principal ministers, there were a few others. These included the *Khān-i-sāmān,* in-charge of the royal household, which was a very important department; *Mīr-manzi* (quarter-master); *Mīr-bakāwal,* (master of the kitchen); *Mīr-ātash* (commander of artillery); *Mīr-baḥr* (commander of the flotilla). Frequent reshuffling of departments and portfolios of ministers was necessitated by exigencies of sound administration, especially in the ministry of finance and revenue. The first *Wakīl,* Bairam Khān, was most powerful and behaved as a substitute-king. After him, the office of *Wākīl* became more or less a sinecure and real power devolved on the *Dīwān,* who held charge of the finance department.

In course of time, the office of *Wazīr* and *Dīwān* at the centre merged into one. While there were *Diwāns* in the provinces. there were no corresponding *Wazīrs.* So, the term *Wazīr* came to signify the Prime Minister of the empire. The provincial *Dīwān* worked under the direction and supervision of the *Wazīr.* He was in no way subordinate to the provincial governor.

Practically all services, with the exception of the religious and judicial, were organized on a military basis and were controlled and paid by the military department. It did not, however, imply that the character of the government was that of an army of occupation. While every officer was under the obligation to be called

up for military service, whenever necessary, they functioned as civilians in normal times.

Akbar overhauled and perfected the army in every detail. The standing army of Akbar may be broadly classified under two categories—the central army directly maintained by the emperor, and the provincial army maintained by the *manṣabdārs.* The strength of the imperial cavalry which was the main wing of the army was more than three lakhs. There was a special body of troopers who were directly recruited from amongst the nobility. They enjoyed special privileges and constituted the imperial body-guard, called *aḥadīs.* There was an inferior class of soldiers known as *dakhīls,* recruited and equipped by the army department and filling the lower ranks.

A rudimentary *manṣabdārī* system existed in former times also, but, under Akbar, it was given a definite and systematic form The *mansabs* between 10,000 and 10 were divided into sixty classes known as *dhāt manṣabs.* Originally, there were only *dhāt manṣabs,* but to facilitate further gradation, another rank named *sawār* was introduced from 5000 *dhāt* downwards. Under this scheme, each *dhāt* rank could be divided into three grades. The *sawār* rank, which equalled *dhāt,* was first grade. Any rank less than equal but not less than half of *dhāt,* was the second grade while less than half of *dhāt* formed the third grade. The amount of funds needed to maintain the equipment, including horses, accoutrements, etc., obligatory on each *mansabdār,* plus his personal pay, were worked out according to certain fixed rules in the secretariat. The *sawār* rank, it would seem, was added only to distinguish the different grades of officers within the same class. It did not entail any additional obligation to maintain horses or any other equipment.

The infantry consisted of all sorts of camp-followers, attendants and others. It numbered more than forty-four lakhs, according to Abū'l Faḍl. There were numerous corps of elephants and also of camels. A large flotilla of boats for river transport was maintained for use during the rainy season. The Mughal artillery, consisting of large and heavy cannons which were cast in their own foundries, grew to be a powerful branch of the military machine.

For the first time in Indo-Islamic literature, the *Āīn-i-Akbarī* expounds the principles of taxation. According to Akbar, as explained in the *Āīn,* taxes were in the nature of wages for the services rendered to his subjects by the king. He abolished all inequitable taxes and humiliating or discriminating imposts, which had been the practice of earlier Muslim rulers to levy on non-Muslims. In addition to land revenue, there were several other sources of income, such as customs, internal transit duties, ferry taxes, octroi, mints, indemnities, monopolies and *abwāb* or illegal cesses enforced by local officers. Many of these were remitted by Akbar. Presents, fines and war booty also constituted a substantial source of income for the emperor.

The system of measurement (*ḍabt*) introduced by Sher Shāh in Hindustān was soon subjected to scrutiny and several experiments were tried to ascertain the best and most efficient method of assessment. The final method of revenue settlement that was decided upon was named *Āīn-i-dahsāla*. The basis of this was the average annual yield of the previous ten years. The whole arable land was divided into areas of more or less uniform productivity and the average yield of each was calculated. The value of the yield in respect of each crop, such as cereals and pulses, was worked out on the average rates of the past nineteen years. Thus, the cash value of the average yield of each farm was calculated and fixed. This system brought about a definiteness in the demand or share of the government, left no chance for any type of corruption, and encouraged cultivation of a superior type of crops. The rate of land tax was fixed at one-third of the gross yield, its value in terms of cash being calculated on the average rate of the previous nineteen years, as stated above. Regarding the form of payment, the choice was given to the cultivator in the case of hard and non-perishable crops. For fruit and vegetable crops, cash payment was made obligatory.

A word might be said here with regard to the proprietorship of the land. Some writers have asserted the utterly erroneous view that in India all the land was always considered legally to be the king's property. There is overwhelming evidence in support of the theory that land was never claimed by any Hindu or Muslim ruler

(with the doubtful exception of the Afghāns) to be his private property, and that it always belonged to the cultivator.

Justice was administered by means of a hierarchy of courts rising from the village council (*Pañcāyat*) to the *pargana*, *sarkār* and provincial courts and finally to the chief *Ṣadr*-cum-*Qāḍī* and the emperor himself. These courts were presided over by *Qāḍīs* appointed in every town and even in important villages. They tried civil and religious cases, applying to Hindus and Muslims their respective laws. In criminal cases, a great deal of discretion was allowed to them and they took a variety of factors into account in awarding punishment. Lapses on the part of government officers were thoroughly investigated, if necessary, through commissions of enquiry. The punishment grew in severity in proportion to the status of the accused and was meant to serve as an example to others.

Traditionally, the Muslim rulers did not concern themselves with the education of the masses, apart from establishing a college or two in capital towns to teach Muslim scriptures, theology and law. Besides, they encouraged deserving scholars by granting stipends and gave grants to *madrasahs* (seminaries). Akbar, however, reviewed the whole system of education and drew up a new curriculum of studies which included subjects like mathematics, logic, astronomy, household economy, medicine and history. The study of ancient Indian literature was greatly encouraged by grants to *pāṭhasālās* and schools. A regular bureau for translating great works such as the *Vedas*, *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Pañcatantra*, was established. The emperor's creative ideas found expression in a number of stone structures Numerous royal palaces, mosques, tombs and other edifices were built and the emperor's architectural dream was realised, above all else, in the city of Fatehpur Sīkri. He was responsible also for the construction of many works of public utility: roads, tanks, wells, reservoirs, public and medicinal baths, *sarāis*, lakes, canals, hospitals for men and animals, dams, ferries and bridges. An elaborate postal system was organised and its use was extended to the public.

At the close of Akbar's reign, the empire had fifteen provinces. Subsequently, Ahmadnagar, Golconda and Bijāpur were added to his realm. The head executive of a province was the *Nāzim*

or *Sūbadār* But the status of the provincial *Dīwān* was the same and the two were supposed to keep watch over each other's activities There were also law officers of the province, viz, the *Qādī* and *Mir-adl* who were under the chief *Ṣadr* of the empire The *sarkār* and *pargana* were administered by almost the same set of officials as under Sher Shāh The *Kotwāl* of the *sarkārs* had charge of criminal justice too, a subject which, in the *pargana,* was dealt with by the *Shiqqdār* while the *pargana* was the lowest unit of administration, the importance of village and caste *Pañcā-yats* as the bedrock of the administrative edifice can hardly be over-emphasised The village council (*Pañcāyat*) performed every type of function from the judiciary and the police to that of maintenance of local roads, irrigation works, temples, mosques, and educational institutions

3

Industry, Trade and Commerce

WHILE THE PERSIAN chronicles give scant information about the economic conditions during the period, there are numerous references in the contemporary literature in Sanskrit and in the regional Indian languages to enable us to reconstruct the state of agriculture and other associated indusries in different parts of the country under Hindu rule, prior to the Turkish conquest and during the Turko-Afghān regime. In the *Āīn-i-Akbarī*, however, we have a reliable source from which we get authentic and detailed information about the extent of cultivation. This work contains measured area statistics in detail ; province-wise village and area statistics have come down to us since Aurangzeb's reign. This statistical area within the Mughal empire was about half that of 1900-20 in parts of Bengal, Bihār, Eastern U.P., Berār and the Indus regions, and from two-thirds to four-fifths in Western U.P., Gujarāt, Mālwa and Khāndesh.

The techniques and implements of agriculture and irrigation evidently remained unchanged during the period under review. Besides sowing by the ordinary plough, drill-sowing seems to have been an equally common practice. We learn that, during the 17th century, dibbling was prevalent in the cultivation of cotton. It may be presumed that cowdung was used more as manure than as fuel, since wood-fuel was available in plenty. Farming was carried on by individual farmers who were also owners of the land. In some cases, however, payment of revenue was the joint responsibility of the whole cultivating community of a village. Means of irrigation were both natural and artificial. Some parts had plentiful rain besides rivers and lakes. Wells, tanks, reservoirs and canals were constructed wherever necesary. Drawing water for irrigation by means of leather buckets and the Persian-wheel and lifting water by means of a *dhenkli* (a system worked on the lever principle) and baling were commonly employed.

The cereal crops of medieval India were the same as today, both in kind and geographical distribution. Certain crops in limited quantities were sown outside their natural zones, such as rice around Lahore and wheat in Bengal. On the whole, the distribution of barley and millets was also similar to that of the present day. As regards cash crops, the cultivation of both cotton and sugar-cane in the 17th century was spread all over the country and not concentrated in a few large tracts as at present. All the oil-seed crops (except groundnut) and fibre-yielding crops were also cultivated in the medieval period. In Akbar's time the oil-seeds were cheaper in relation to wheat, obviously owing to their abundance. Jute was still an unimportant crop grown only for local consumption in Bengal. On the other hand, the dye-yielding crops like indigo possessed considerable economic importance in medieval times. The best quality of indigo for the purpose of export was produced in the Bayāna-Doāb-Mewāt area and in Sehwān (Sind) and Sarkhej (Gujarāt). Opium cultivation was encouraged and it was widely grown in Mālwa and Bihār. The cultivation of tobacco, introduced at the beginning of the 17th century, was extended to almost all parts of India by the middle of that century, particularly in the districts around the deltas of the Godāvarī and Krsṇā rivers.

Besides a large variety of fruits grown all over the country, there were wild fruits in abundance. Firūz Tughluq is said to have planted 1,200 fruit gardens around Delhi. The aristocrats generally maintained orchards. The Mughal gardens all over northern India are well known. In medieval times, silk was produced largely in Bengal, Assam, Kashmīr and on the western coast. Woollen cloth of the finest variety was produced in very large quantities in Kashmīr and other Himālayan regions and was an item of export. In cold regions animal skin for use as apparel was quite popular.

It may be safely presumed that the medieval Indian peasant was better off in respect of cattle wealth than his modern descendant. Akbar's administration allowed four bullocks, two cows and one buffalo as the number of cattle exempted from tax. The price of *ghee* in relation to wheat was much lower. All edible oils, such as mustard, linseed, gingelly etc , were very abundant and cheap.

The forests covered nearly half the area of northern India. In

the Deccan as well as the coastal regions, there were extensive forests. These were sources of a large variety of economically valuable products, including timber, firewood, gums, fruits and numerous herbs. Fish also formed an important part of the diet of the masses in Kashmīr, Bengal and in the coastal regions. Medieval India could also boast of pearl fishery, located off the south-western coast As many as 60,000 persons are said to have been engaged in collecting pearls at the end of the 16th century.

Salt, an every day necessity, was extracted from the soil almost everywhere. The Sāmbhar lake in Rājasthān and the Salt Range in the north-west produced plenty of salt which served the needs of the whole of North India. Stone of several varieties besides marble, both black and white, was quarried in large quantities. This industry and crafts of architects, masons, carpenters and smiths prospered greatly under the state's patronage. Diamond-mining, associated with Golconda, was another notable industry of the Deccan. The actual mines were, in fact, situated far away from Golconda. Iron was plentiful everywhere, except on the western coast. Copper was mined at several places in Rājasthān. It appears to have been a government monopoly in the 17th century. Silver was scarce, but the large amount of gold found in the form of both coins and ornaments in all parts of the country makes one presume that the metal was available in sufficient quantities to satisfy the enormous demand.

A number of processes of production, which have now been separated from agriculture, were in medieval times undertaken by the agricultural producer himself. Cotton for instance, was ginned by the peasants, then cleaned or carded by a class of itinerant labourers, called *dhunvās,* and finally spun into yarn by the *julāhās.* Sugar and *gur* were manufactured from sugar-cane in "mills" and "furnaces" in the villages as observed by travellers in the 17th century. The extraction of oil from oil-seeds was entirely in the hands of a semi-itinerant class of *telīs* (oilmen) working with ox-driven presses. Indigo too was manufactured almost entirely in the villages Among other rural industries may be mentioned the manufacture of spirits and liquors from unrefined sugar, *mahuā,* barley and rice and scents from flowers.

Pottery and leather-work were the most important non-agricul-

tural village industries. Leather-tanning, manufacture of such articles as leather-buckets, footwear, sheaths, bags and boxes etc., were flourishing industries all over the country The smith's craft in gold, silver, bronze, iron, copper and many alloys was highly developed. Besides ornaments, the craftsmen produced agricultural implements, weapons of war, domestic utensils, and bronze, silver and copper statues of gods and goddesses, in large quantities. All these crafts attained an excellence and refinement not found any where else in the world at that time.

The weaving of cloth from cotton yarn was undoubtedly the foremost industry in the country The ordinary weavers (*julāhās*) formed the largest group among the artisans Just as cotton cultivation was spread throughout India, so also was cloth made everywhere for local use The cotton cloth was of such fine quality that it was in great demand abroad. A large amount of wealth was earned from this export. In addition to ordinary cloth, finer varieties were woven for a limited market. In the 14th century, as well as in the 16th and 17th, the muslin of Dacca enjoyed a high reputation for its fine texture and light weight. In Akbar's time fine cloth of many varieties was also produced at Vārānasi, Mau, Āgra, Mālwa and Gujarāt

Cotton-weaving also supported certain subsidiary industries, such as dyeing and, in certain regions, calico-printing, besides that marvellous variety of cloth-printing technique known as *bandhanī* (tie and dye) which was the speciality of Rājasthān and its neighbouring regions Gujarāt had a long established silk-weaving industry, although sericulture itself was alien to that province. Cambay silks were listed among luxury goods at the time of 'Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī (A.D 1296-1316). In the Mughal days, silk fabrics woven at Ahmadābād enjoyed a high reputation. Abū'l Faḍl also notices the silk-weaving industry of Lahore, Āgra and Fatehpur Sīkri

Blankets and carpets were woven from the coarse Indian wool. The production of woollen cloth was, however, small since quilted vests stuffed with cotton were generally used in winter. The famous shawls of Kashmīr were woven from the mountain-goats' fleece imported from Ladākh and Tibet. Among the coarser fibres, hemp, not jute, predominated. Outside Bengal, sack-cloth was

woven out of hemp, but on the western coast, coconut fibre was in extensive use for this purpose.

Brass and copper were among the large-scale industries. These metals were used in the mints for currency. The high level of purity and uniformity of the coins of the Delhi Sulṭāns and the Mughals is a testimony to the skill and technique of medieval coiners Copper, brass and bronze were largely used for making images of deities in various sizes, the famous *Naṭarāja* being an example. They were also used for making vessels of worship. The architectural enterprises of the state included palaces, fortresses, city-walls, mosques and tombs. These kept a large force of labourers and artisans employed. The number of skilled artisans, sculptors, masons and other craftsmen engaged in building private houses in the cities, the gigantic temples and palaces, fortresses and dams must have been literally countless.

A large number of boats operated by the *mallāh* caste were constructed throughout India for riverine navigation Large seagoing ships were built on an extensive scale both on the eastern and the western coasts They were built not only for Indian shipowners but for foreigners as well The heaviest passenger ships of the time (1,000-1,500 contemporary tons) were meant for the *haj* traffic in the 16th and 17th centuries

There is enough evidence that paper of some sort was manufactured and used in ancient and early medieval India. It is likely, however, that the Chinese type of paper was brought to this country only in the 11th century. Even in Balban's time (A.D. 1266-1287), paper used to be so scarce that old *farmāns* had to be washed off so that new ones could be written on the same paper. In southern India, palm leaves were still largely in use till the 17th century In northern India, the manufacture as well as use of paper developed so rapidly that the village accountant had begun to keep his detailed records on paper as early as the 14th century An extensive book trade, unknown in previous times, now developed. The printing press, was not yet established in India, despite the fact that the Chinese invention had reached Europe as early as the 15th century.

Leather was used for making a large variety of articles, such as saddles, scabbards, book-covers, shoes and shields. In Bengal,

sugar was packed in leather parcels. In Gujarāt, gold and silver embroidered leather mats of such beauty were manufactured that they won the admiration of the Italian traveller Marco Polo. Two other important industries, providing means of livelihood to large numbers of artisans, were carpentry and pottery. It is not possible to enumerate here all the minor industries that existed in medieval India. A large number of these were devoted to the production of decorative articles. The coral industry of Gujarāt and Bengal, the cornelian industry of Gujarāt, besides ivory-carving, gold-embroidery, etc., may be cited as examples.

The industrial production of medieval India was entirely based on handicraft, the instruments in use being simple and cattle being the main source of power There is no evidence of wind or water being harnessed However, the use of grinding mills driven by hydraulic turbines (*pan-chakkīs*) seems to have come into vogue quite early Production was carried on by individual craftsmen usually in their homes and with tools owned by themselves The village artisans as well as those who rendered domestic services, such as barbers, washermen and water-carriers, were paid through land allotments or fixed shares out of each harvest from every peasant. The rural cotton-carders, weavers, oil-men, smiths, carpenters and potters generally bartered their services for such payments in kind However, in the cities, the artisans generally sold their finished products for cash in the open market Here, too, on festive occasions, some of them bartered their products for gifts in kind. Others, such as gold and copper smiths, weavers, and glass-manufacturers seemed to have worked on a kind of 'putting-out' system very similar to that of Europe during the 17th century. The existence of a number of wealthy merchants, who also carried on import and export trade, shows that these and many other similar industries throve because they were well organized In such industries as ship-building, mining and construction of forts, palaces, bridges, *sarāis, bāolīs* (stepwells) and many others, large numbers of skilled and unskilled labourers were employed. For state consumption, *kārkhānas* or workshops were maintained by kings and nobles who perhaps imposed still greater discipline and supervision on the artisans Firūz Shāh's *kārkhānas* are well known and Bernier (17th century) has left us a description

of these workshops, which were maintained to meet the requirements of the employers and their households.

Trade and Commerce

There can be little doubt that the bulk of marketable products, both agricultural and non-agricultural, was absorbed by local demand. The needs of the towns for food, clothing and other articles had to be met largely from the country around them. It may be justly presumed that the large urban population, interspersed in the midst of villages all around, would have absorbed a considerable portion of the production of the villages The sale of these products was well organised. A market day was fixed for each locality when all the cottage manufactures were brought and exposed for sale. These consumer goods represented the surplus left after the bulk had been taken by the rich merchants who marketed them. Apart from the periodical markets known variously as *peṭh* or *hāt*, itinerant peddlars also supplied articles of daily consumption to householders in towns as well as villages.

The conception of a road in medieval times was naturally very different from that of the present day. Most roads seem to have been unmetalled and were only in the form of a track with rows of trees on both sides. One notable feature of all roads was the existence, at short distances, of *sarāis* (rest-houses or pavilions), wells, a small clump of shady trees and quite often a tank, all in one group Small tanks containing water for cattle were also invariably added These amenities were provided by well-to-do Hindus who believed it to be a necessary religious duty. There can be no doubt that there were cross-country or trunk roads as well as branch or minor roads, pathways and, in hilly areas, bridle-paths. On some roads at least, there were minarets at intervals of *karohs* (about 3 to 4 km) to show the way. There were bridges on smaller rivers and ferries and fords on the larger ones. Bullock carts, camels (in western India only) and pack-oxen were chiefly used for conveying goods over long distances The merchants usually organised themselves in *qāfilahs* or caravans for safety. The *banjāras* specialised in conveying goods of bulk, such as food-grains, sugar, butter and salt on their pack-oxen. Each mobile

camp or *tāndā* of *banjāras* could consist of thousands of pack animals. But, unless price differences were very substantial, it did not pay to transport goods in bulk overland. River transport was cheaper and, therefore, very common. In Bengal, Sind and Kashmīr, goods were mostly conveyed by boats. There was considerable traffic on the Yamunā and Gaṅgā rivers as, indeed, on all navigable rivers. In the 17th century, barges of 300 to 500 tons are said to have sailed from Āgra to Patna and Bengal, each taking a year to make the downward and return journey. In the Indus system, Lahore and Multān were big river-ports sending down boats to the port of Tatta. The tonnage of Indian shipping engaged in coastal trade was also quite large by contemporary standards.

The evidence available enables us to draw a fairly comprehensive picture of the pattern of trade between various regions of the country in the 17th century. Information about the earlier centuries is rather scanty, but we may assume that, in broad features, the pattern was practically similar

During the 17th century, as also earlier, Bengal enjoyed great reputation for plentitude and low prices. It maintained a regular coastal trade with Coromandel, exporting rice, sugar and butter, and importing cotton yarn and tobacco. Kerala received rice and sugar, besides opium, from Bengal by sea. Bengal sugar was carried even to Gujarāt. Wheat was also sometimes exported from Bengal to southern India and to the Portuguese possessions on the western coast There was an equally brisk trade between Bengal and Patna, which was further connected with Āgra by river and by the great imperial highway. Bengal exported rice, raw silk, sugar and textile to Patna and Āgra, receiving salt, cotton, opium and wheat in return Salt was very scarce in Bengal and was imported from other places, especially from Rājasthān *via* Āgra.

Āgra was certainly the biggest commercial centre of the 17th century. Its needs of rice, wheat and butter were met by supplies drawn from places far down the Gaṅgā, Patna and even Bengal. Salt was brought here from Rājasthān, while it sent sugar, wheat and Bengal silk to Gujarāt Āgra owed much of its commercial fame to indigo, which was exported to all parts of India and to

many parts of the world. From Lahore and Multān, textiles, sugar and ginger were sent down to Tatta in return for pepper and dates. Sehwān indigo was also exported through Tatta, which itself received pepper from Malābar. The chief export of Kashmīr was saffron and shawls, while it imported salt, pepper, opium, cotton yarn, etc., from the rest of India. Gujarāt occupied a very prominent position in the commercial world of the time. It imported wheat and other foodgrains from the Mālwa and Ajmer provinces, while rice was brought from the Deccan and Malābar. It exported cotton, cotton textiles and silk goods to Āgra and tobacco to Tatta. With Kerala, it had a traditional coastal trade, exchanging opium for pepper From the Deccan, specially Khāndesh, cotton and cotton textile were sent to Āgra. Pepper from the western coast was also sent overland to Āgra Coromandel had an extensive trade with Bengal. In addition, it exported rice to Kerala *via* Kanniyākumāri.

The main land routes connecting India with the rest of Asia went through mountain-passes in the north-west. Abū'l Faḍl wrote that Kābul and Kandahār were 'the twin gates of Hindustān, the one leading to Turkistān and the other to Persia ' The caravans for these places and beyond were made up in Lahore and Multān, which were great marts partly for this reason. Sea-borne trade was conducted from a large number of ports On the western coast, Lahari Bandar (in Tatta) had replaced in importance the old port of Diabal by the 13th century. In Gujarāt, Cambay was the chief port till the end of the 16th century, when its place was taken by Surat. Further South, there were a series of ports viz Kandahār (till the 17th century), Goa, Calicut and Cochin From these ports, trade was carried on with the Persian Gulf and Europe Calicut and Cochin also served as stopping places for ships plying between the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. On the eastern coast, Masulipatam, Pulicut, Nāgappattinam, Madras (in the 17th century), Sātgaon (and later Hooghly) and Sripur (near Sonārgaon, Bengal) served for trade with the East Indies. There were cargo-ship services to Persia and the East Indies *via* Coromandel Chittagong was a base for pirates and was more closely associated with Arakan than with Bengal. It is difficult to estimate the volume of trade conducted through

these ports. The overland trade was probably much smaller in volume than sea-borne trade A description of the exports and imports may now be attempted. China exported to India silk goods, porcelain, lacquered ware, camphor and various drugs and perfumes From Burma and the East Indies (Pegu to Java), India received spices, particularly cloves and nutmeg, and small quantities of gold and silver. In return, textiles, yarn and opium were sent from both Bengal and Coromandel. Bengal exported sugar and textiles received from Gujarāt. To Central Asia, India exported textiles, indigo, silk and opium, receiving in return horses, fur and musk Bengal silk and sugar were exported to Persia, from where were brought coined silver, horses, dried fruits, silk goods, carpets, etc. From Bahrain came pearls. Trade with the Levant was conducted either through Basra or the Red Sea ports. Before the 16th century, when Europe also drew supplies of Indian goods through the Levant, this trade was more important. India exported textiles, indigo and pepper and received coined gold and silver, fine woollen cloth and silk. From the Red Sea region, India received Yemen horses, coffee, corals and Abyssinian slaves, textiles were the chief articles of export from India to this region, though rice was also sent to Yemen. With the East African coast the volume of trade could not have been large, Indian textiles being exchanged for small quantities of amber, ebony and ivory.

A new element, which we have excluded from this description, was introduced by the opening of the direct sea-route between Europe and India at the end of the 15th century, when Vasco da Gama reached India after rounding the Cape of Good Hope in A D. 1498. This resulted in an immense increase in the volume of Indo-European trade, though it is difficult to speak in precise quantitative terms. Undoubtedly, the new trade stimulated production in particular commodities, such as indigo and textiles in Gujarāt and silk in Bengal. In the internal economy of the country, the most important effect of the European trade was probably seen in the rise of prices which the influx of silver and gold brought about in the 17th century.

The standard coin under the Delhi Sultans from Iltutmish

onwards was the silver *tankā* weighing 175 grain. The currency system was, however, bimetallic, there being parallel coins in copper, the basic unit of which was the *jital*. In the 14th century, 48 or 50 *jitals* were held equal in worth to a *tankā*. The Sultāns issued billon coins as well, and gold issues have also survived. The Lodīs, who never minted silver, issued a heavy billon coin of 145 grains called *bahlolī*. In many of the successor kingdoms of the Delhi Sultanate, such as Gujarāt, Mālwa, Khāndesh and Berār, *tankās* of coarse silver continued to be minted well into the 16th century. The Vijayanagar empire had only gold and copper coins, the standard gold coin being the *hun* or pagoda. The pagoda continued to be the standard coin in southern India and Golconda in the 17th century, long after the destruction of the Vijayanagar empire. In northern India, Sher Shāh established a bimetallic system by issuing a rupee of silver and making the *tankā* a purely copper coin. The Mughals from Akbar onwards continued the same system: their rupee weighed 178 grains (180 under Aurangzeb), and the alloy in these never rose above 4 per cent. In copper they minted *dāms* of 323 grains each, these being originally the half-*tankā* of Sher Shāh In the last years of Akbar, a rupee fetched 40 *dāms*, and this became subsequently the paper value of the rupee. In fact, the copper price of the rupee declined throughout the 17th century. The Mughals also issued gold coins, known as *mohur* or *ashrafī*, but these were not normally used in the market. The Mughal coinage was of great metallic purity and uniformity The minting was 'free' in the sense that any one could take bullion to the mint and get it coined at a small charge (not exceeding 6 per cent of the value). The value of coins, therefore, corresponded with their weight in bullion. They were, however, liable to depreciate not only from loss in weight, but also with the passage of time. A newly minted coin enjoyed a premium over older coins The *sarrāfs* or shroffs specialised in getting the bullion coined at the mints, and in testing and changing money.

Trade in medieval times was helped by an elaborate system of short-term credit, based on the drawing and discounting of *hundīs*. The *hundī* was a written order or promise to pay an amount at sight or after a period of time at a place specified in the paper.

When an ordinary person wanted to remit money to some other place, he went to a *ṣarrāf* who accepted the amount and drew a *hundī* on his agent or correspondent at the other place. The *ṣarrāf's* charges for this service were not very high, for instance, it was 1 per cent on *hundīs* drawn at Delhi on Āgra (A.D. 1651). The *hundī* was also drawn by merchants for raising money to pay for goods purchased In such cases, a *hundī* was very similar to a bill of exchange. It was usually discounted by the *sarrāfs* and was fully transferable. The rates of discount naturally varied with the credit of the drawer. The discount on *hundīs* of merchants with high credit drawn at Āgra on Surat amounted to about 4¼ to 5 per cent in the 17th century. The *hundīs* generally matured after two months, but the holder could not demand payment if the goods against which it was drawn were lost in transit.

Goods in transit, whether on land or on sea, could be insured with *sarrāfs* by taking *hundīs* covering the risk of loss of goods against which they were drawn. Sea-going ships were also insured. Insurance charges do not seem to have been very heavy, e.g., 2½ per cent of insured value on cochineal sent from Surat to Āgra (A.D. 1655), while it was 2¾ per cent on sugar sent from Surat to Gambroon (a Persian port) by sea. The *sarrāfs* also undertook to convey insured goods themselves, a practice for which the term *bīmah* was employed.

Medieval India had a large class of professional money-lenders, known as *sāhukārs, mahājans* and *ṣarrāfs*. They engaged in money-lending of all types, from usurious loans to the discounting of *hundīs*. The *sarrāfs* and *mahājans* sometimes attempted to augment their resources by accepting deposits. The augmentation of the resources of the *sarrāfs* and *mahājans*, either through their own profits or through deposits, did not necessarily add much to the volume of mercantile capital, the additional resources being largely re-employed in usurious money-lending. The big money-lenders and bankers of the town found in the nobility a much more profitable clientele than among merchants. The medieval Indian state commanded large financial resources. 'Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī's government is said to have advanced loans to merchants to encourage trade. The Multānī merchants alone received twenty lakh *tankās* from his treasury to enable them

to bring goods to Delhi But these were exceptional measures, and medieval governments normally did not grant financial assistance to merchants in this manner.

4

General Economic Conditions

THE PROBLEM OF forming anything like a faithful picture of the general economic condition of a vast country like India with a variegated population, over a long period of no less than eight centuries, is naturally fraught with great difficulties. The inherent complexities of the problem are further enhanced by the paucity of available data on the economic life of the early centuries of the period under review.

The crucial point to bear in mind in this context is the historical nature of the subject, and that socio-economic conditions kept evolving with the passage of time Another fact to be remembered is the basically different attitudes of the Turkish conquerors and the Hindu rulers and subsequent changes in the outlook of their successors No sweeping generalisations, either for the whole period or the entire country, can be correct or fair Hence, it would be necessary first to be clear as to the criteria by which to estimate the country's general economic condition.

To start with, we should try to estimate the overall quantum of wealth which the country possessed as compared to that of the contemporary world. We should endeavour to see in what manner its economic resources were distributed among the various sections and classes of the society. We must also note what role the successive state systems played in promoting the general welfare of the people or increasing the wealth of the country as a whole. It would also be essential to understand the role of the time-honoured system of local self-government in its various forms of village and caste *Pañcāyats,* trade guilds and group corporations. Finally, it is of the utmost importance to comprehend the part played in the preservation and stability of the country's economy by the co-operative effort and organisation of its merchant princes and big business houses on the one hand, and on the other by those religio-cultural institutions of which

the main centres were the great medieval temples rendering all manner of services to the community.

As regards the wealth of the country as a whole, certain broad facts stand out unmistakably. All foreign travellers and observers as well as our own literary, historical and epigraphical sources bear witness to the enormous treasures possessed by the kings and the nobility, as also the equally vast wealth accumulated in the numerous temples throughout the country. There was another great centre of riches the importance of which has never been properly appreciated by writers on this subject. This centre of wealth was represented by our great industrial magnates and merchant-princes. Since the earliest historical times, they wielded a degree of influence on the economic life of the country which can hardly be over-rated. The accumulation of incalculable but dead treasures was one permanent aspect of our economy at the point of time when northern India was suddenly convulsed by a series of invasions which fell like lightning on the Indian princes, in quick succession and eventually wiped them out. Apart from the ruin and devastation that the invader left behind, what is more relevant to our present purpose is the enormous wealth and treasures of every description which he carried away from the royal houses and the temples where they had been accumulating for centuries. It is noteworthy that the Hindu chiefs had vied with one another over a long period in raising temples and filling them with treasures. The glory thus earned was reckoned only next to the glory won in warfare. The temples of Ābu, Dhār, Khajurāho and Konārak were being built at the time when Multān, Thānesvar, Mathura, Kannauj and Vārānasi were being ravaged by the Turkish invaders

The situation in the South was not different, although this region remained free for another three centuries from the depredations to which the North had fallen victim. Here, the expenditure on the religious enterprises far outstripped those of the North. As if the fabulous expenditure on the construction of the temples was not enough, they were filled with gifts and donations in the form of the costliest jewels, precious metals and dresses, almost beyond count.

It is obvious that the plunder of the capital cities and sacred

centres of the Hindus, which became a regular feature in the following centuries, first by foreigners and then by the Delhi Sultāns, did not succeed in depleting these treasures. It was as though they were inexhaustible. It must also be noted in this connection that every Hindu in the country, rich or poor, high or low, made a gift according to his means not only to the temples but also to the numerous works of public utility, as a sacred social obligation which he fulfilled happily and willingly. This was ingrained in the minds of the people as a traditional obligation enjoined by the Dharmaśāstras. The wealthy section of the people undertook to construct pavilions on the roads which were often fairly big, comprising several chambers, a well and a trough for cattle to drink water, a clump of trees, or even a big garden and a tank. All these benefactions were gifted by inhabitants of villages and towns in a spirit of selfless service and for spiritual satisfaction.

With regard to the business magnates, the names of the most famous among them who possessed vast riches and carried on trade both inland and foreign on an extensive scale are well-known. There was, besides a much larger class of businessmen of different financial levels about whom we have ample information from contemporary sources, including some biographical works. These and the wealthy *banjāras* served to maintain an unbroken stream of supplies to the different parts of the country as also to the sea-port markets for export. This link between the inland centres of production of goods such as textiles, indigo, metal-ware, ivory products, silks and many others, and the export markets kept them continually fed with all sorts of commodities. It served as a perennial pipeline bringing in such large quantities of foreign specie that some countries felt alarmed at the heavy drain of their gold and were forced to take severe measures in order to stop the import of Indian goods. Foreign trade thus constituted one major source of the ever increasing wealth of the country If we add to this the immense accumulations of the mineral and industrial products of which we have glowing accounts by foreign as well as indigenous writers, then one need not wonder about the universal belief that India possessed inexhaustible wealth. Regarding the opulence and prosperity of South India, we learn from

Marco Polo who visited India in A.D. 1294 and observed that the rich people of Malabār were born traders He has described a very practical system of commercial education given by the Vaiśyas of the South to their youth and admires their honesty and truthfulness. Marco Polo's detailed description of the commercial community of South India shows that, in the 13th century, India still maintained its ancient reputation as one of the chief marts of Asia. He further testified to the vast accumulations of wealth in the royal treasuries and spoke of the famous diamond mines of Golconda.

With regard to the industries and manufactures, Marco Polo said that the finest muslins and costly fabrics were made in the 'Teluga' country, which looked like the tissue of spider's web. There was no king or queen in the world who would not love to wear such apparel The largest sheep in the world were to be found here and the people had all the necessaries of life in great abundance. Marco Polo goes on to give an account of the great trade of the Malabār coast in spices, indigo, etc., for which merchants came from the east and the west. The rise to eminence of the Cola power early in the 11th century, their great navy by means of which they made extensive conquests and augmented their overseas trade, as also the splendour of their capitals and the richness of their temples are too well-known to need repetition In later centuries too, the prosperity and affluence of their upper classes continued to prevail A poet of the 13th century recounts the visit of king Kumārapāla Solāṅki to the mansion of a multi-millionaire and mentions with amazement the huge stores of gold and valuables in his host's palace The immense riches possessed by the courtesans of these times was also a matter of frequent comment by the contemporary writers

Of the subsequent centuries, we have more ample and vivid accounts left by a number of travellers and official envoys. These foreigners were struck by the enormous riches of the kings in the south, especially Vijayanagar, as also by the large number of flourishing towns and cities, and the general prosperity of the common people. In the 14th century, Ibn Batūta travelled all over the north as well as south He mentioned in his writings the products and trade of northern India, as also the foreign com-

merce, ship building industry and wealth of the coastal regions in the South. In the 13th century, the volume of trade controlled by the merchants of Multān and other frontier towns can be estimated from their monopoly of the entire import of horses from outside 'Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī had to take drastic steps to prevent them from exploiting the government when he decided to recruit a vast army for which thousands of good horses were needed. At the same time, we learn of the incalculable treasures in gold, silver and jewellery which the Khaljī Sultāns and their Generals, Kāfūr and Khusraw, brought from the southern capitals and courts As we proceed to later times, we notice that, with the establishment of stable conditions during the reign of the Sūrīs and then under Akbar, industries, manufactures and trade grew rapidly as a result of the facilities and amenities on the roads and the security of movement provided by the state.

In the eastern parts, the 11th and 12th centuries were a period of peace, plenty and happiness Land tax was only 1½ pice per plough per month. Incidentally, such a low rate of land tax shows that the necessities of life were extremely cheap and abundant. Nikitin, a Russian traveller of the 15th century, was struck by the amazingly low prices of commodities and noted that people could have a moderately comfortable life on a pittance. There is ample evidence of fine and luxurious domestic furnishings On the other hand, oppressive txation inflicted sufferings on the people. Our knowledge of these social conditions is often based on the writings of contemporary poets and it may be that the picture is coloured Yet, it is probable that the poorer sections of society did have to lead a life of hardship. Nikitin also refers to the miseries of the poor people and on the way of disposal of prisoners of war from Vijayanagar by the Muslim kings

Manufactures, handicrafts and natural products were in such abundance that large quantities of them were exported Bengal was famous for its ship building industry and, even if we make allowance for the hyperbole of the poets, it is fairly certain that large ships were built by wealthy merchants. A multi-millionaire merchant named Cānda, lord of Champak, was the owner of a fleet of vessels and he himself made long distance voyages for trade with far-away countries.

During the three centuries of the rule of the Sultāns of Delhi, people who lived far from the capital were comparatively immune from oppression. However, they had to bear the burden of heavier taxation with hardly any constructive help from the government. The position changed during the rule of the Sūrīs and then of the Mughals Effective measures were adopted by Sher Shāh to give the people every facility to live and work in safety. His public works encouraged trade and improved the general lot of the common men. In fact, his concern for the peasantry was so intense that anyone who did the least damage to their farms even during war-time had to suffer severe punishment.

About the economic conditions under the Mughals, we have a wealth of detailed data from the large number of European visitors as also from indigenous sources In view of the limitation of space, we shall refer only to certain prominent features of the country's economy The Mughals were traditionally a land-bound people and never realized the importance of sea power. That was why they failed to build up a navy or sea-borne trade even though there was the example of the Western powers who were in the thick of competition for the mastery of the seas. The great Indian monarchs, with all their prowess, had to depend on the mercy of the foreigners even for the safety of their pilgrims going to Arabia. This greatly handicapped the traditional overseas commerce. Even so, the business houses carried on a very profitable trade, having established relations with the European companies which had set up factories at Indian sea-ports. We learn from the Italian traveller Manucci that Surat was the largest port in India to which ships came from all the countries of Europe, West Asia and China. Whenever a loaded vessel arrived, the Hindu traders went aboard, and enquired whether the Captain would sell the entire cargo of the ship. They made payment either in cash or furnished goods in exchange. Other foreign visitors described the large number of cargo ships which came to Surat, Cambay and other coastal towns They also referred to the various handicrafts, such as ivory bracelets for women Great merchant princes like Vīrjī Vorā of Surat (17th century), Śāntidāsa Jawāharī of Ahmedābād, Ḥājī Sa'īd Beg (middle of 17th century), Manohardāsa (A.D. 1630), Malay Chetty of the East Coast and a host of

others were famous as financiers, exporters and importers. Many of them had ships of their own and often lent large sums of money to the Mughal princes.

The emperors helped the growth of industry by maintaining numerous factories for the manufacture of various articles, such as armaments, court equipment, silks, carpets, etc. For Akbar's wardrobe, as we learn from Abū'l Faḍl, one thousand full suits were prepared every season Of precious metals, jewellery and other costly articles, there was a glut with the higher classes as also in the markets of cities like Āgra, Fatehpur Sīkri, Delhi, Jaunpur, Ahmedābād, Burhānpur, Lahore and Murshidābad. Ralph Fitch visited Āgra and Fatehpur Sīkri in A.D. 1585 and found them to be larger than London and very populous. The entire distance of twelve miles between them was a sort of contiguous market, full of victuals. Terry gives a similar description of Lahore, and Monserrate regarded Burhānpur to be 'very great, rich and full of people'. Reaching Sonārgaon (Dacca) in A.D. 1586, Fitch noted 'the best and finest cloth made in all India' During the reigns of Shāh Jahān and Aurangzeb, Delhi grew in importance and became the chief city and emporium of trade and crafts. De Laet, who visited India during the times of Jahāngīr and Shāh Jahān, says that "ships from Mocha bring back hardly anything but gold and silver. Precious metals are also imported from other countries and never allowed to be exported." Bernier was impressed with the extreme fertility of Bengal and by its production of "innumerable articles of export, such as cotton, silk, indigo " He also saw the manufacture of fine carpets, brocades embroideries, gold and silver cloths He comments · 'It should not escape notice that gold and silver, after circulating in every other quarter of the globe, come at length to be swallowed up ....in Hindustan or even a part of gold from America found its way to India' From Bernier we also learn that India consumed a large quantity of dry fruits Thus, due to her geographical position, and also as the supplier of luxuries to the civilized world, India became a great repository of gold and silver. This process had started as early as the 1st century A.D. Even Pliny lamented the drain of Roman gold into India. In this context, when it is remembered that due to the extraordinary cheapness of commodities,

cowrie (sea-shell) was used as a coin worth about 1/80 of a *paisā*, the prevalent view that the masses of the common people led a life of misery may appear to be ridiculous.

We may also take note of private companies owned by rich families of traders specialising in the transport and insurance of goods between distant parts of the country, both by land and water. An idea of the amount of commerce and exchange of goods between the different regions can be formed from the description of river ports which were choked up with thousands of cargo boats, many of them carrying several thousand maunds of goods There were equally safe means of land transport, according to the kind of commodity to be carried. The sea-ports which studded India's extensive sea-board were a substantial source of revenue to the state Besides the court and official hierarchy, there was a prosperous class of technicians, artisans and skilled workers belonging to numerous vocations. Famous architects, artisans, smiths, ivory workers, jewellers, perfumers and armourers were paid liberally, some of them getting munificient rewards in addition to regular salaries The tours of the emperors for war or for some other reason were akin to moving cities consisting, among other items, of scores of bazars specialising in the supply of numerous commodities varying from armaments and clothes to diverse types of foods.

The most serious handicap from which the country's trade and commerce suffered was the amazing neglect of the Mughals towards the attainment of sea-power. The inevitable consequence was a serious set-back to India's international trade against her western rivals who commanded the sea routes and enjoyed the added advantage of utilising progressively the technical and scientific advancement of the west. The great business magnates mentioned above, who once controlled and dominated that trade, could not withstand the hard competition and the bulk of commerce ultimately passed into the hands of the English. Later in the 18th and the following centuries the English made use of their political power to destroy India's industries and exports in order to develop their own economy. It is undeniable that, not long after Akbar, there was a gradual decline in administrative efficiency, and an increase in the tendency to exploit the resources of the tax-payer

in order to use them mainly on wasteful undertakings This process culminated in Aurangzeb's policy of sacrificing the basic obligations of the government to an irreconcilable mixture of self-centred ambition and religious parochialism. The utter neglect of the commercial life of the nation struck a blow at the economic life and growth of the country.

It is also clear that, all through this period, there existed a very strong middle class, both upper and lower, represented by businessmen, leading village dignitaries, artisans, manufacturers, technicians and others. In the face of such overwhelming evidence, the view held by Moreland that the middle classes were few in number is baseless It is beside the point that under some rulers the middle classes, like all others led a precarious existence. Incidentally, it is also clear that India in this period was not mainly agricultural, as is generally supposed. On the contrary, she could favourably compare with any other country in both the quality and quantity of her industrial products.

This brings us to the question of the impact of state policies on the general lot of the people In the Hindu states, the incidence of land revenue was very mild and cases exceeding the prescribed limits were rare, even if, in times of emergency, some additional levies were imposed to meet the extra demands on the government It is also undeniable that with the exception of some big works like tanks, reservoirs, embankments and temples, all necessary amenities and services had to be provided by the people for themselves. They were left free to look after their affairs through local bodies. That led to the phenomenal rise of the authority of village and caste council (*Pañcāyats*). It also led to the assumption of political power by trade guilds and corporations The practice of providing irrigation works, roads, wells, tanks, reservoirs and other amenities for their common benefit became in course of time a religious duty enjoined by the Dharmaśāstras.

In the pre-Turkish period, the royalty and the other higher echelons of society lived a life of plenty and even luxury. We have scanty information about the economic position or the standard of life of the common people, the farmers, the skilled and unskilled labourers and domestic workers. However, there is

reason to presume that, since the time of the great Guptas and Harṣa, the condition of the peasantry and the country people in general had not undergone any appreciable change. Therefore, even though a large section of the rural and urban working classes could not have enjoyed what may be described as affluence, they were never in want of the necessities of life and had ample resources to feed and clothe themselves It would be pertinent here to point out that some modern writers have upheld the ridiculous view, based on the superficial observation of foreign travellers, that in many parts of the country— in south India, for instance— most people went about half naked and unshod because of poverty or lack of civilization. They forget that dress is mainly and primarily dictated by climatic conditions and considerations of utility and convenience. For the people of the sultry regions of the south or east, that was the sensible and healthy way of living Even the royalty and other affluent classes wore scanty raiment in summer. It may be conceded that a large number of the poorer people could not possibly afford an abundance of clothing but their essential needs were always satisfied. In different regions, the people had clothes to suit the varying local climates. The clothes of the poor were generally made from coarse home-spun and locally woven cloth, but they were good enough to shelter the users against the inclemencies of the weather.

The general standard of wages can be gauged from those of the temple staff The emoluments of the lowest staff were enough to keep them well-fed and well-clad. The first positive evidence of the cheapness of commodities of daily consumption comes from 'Alāu'd-dīn Khaljī's time. Here is a summary of the controlled rates fixed by the Khaljī Sultān: wheat 7½ *jitals* per maund, other cereals and pulses 3 to 5 *jitals* per maund, white sugar 1⅓ *jitals* per seer, brown sugar (*gur* etc.) ⅓ *jital* per seer, butter 1 *jital* per 2½ seers, oil (*til*) 1 *jital* per 3 seers and salt 2 *jitals* per maund. The seer of that time was equivalent to 24 *tolas* but maund was equal to 40 seers ; therefore, two manuds were equal to 24 British seers or about 22 kgs. *Jital* was 1/50 of a silver *taṅkā* of one *tolā*. Thus, if the *taṅkā* be taken as equal to one rupee the *jital* would be 2 *paise*. But the comparative rates of silver, copper and gold at that time and now, and also the intrinsic value

of coins and many other factors, render the problem of comparing the 13th century rates with the present too complicated. It may be held that the normal rates of commodities before and after the control would have been about 25 per cent more, i.e., wheat might be selling at 10 *jitals* per maund of 12 seers. Another specific mention of the extreme cheapness of commodities pertains to the time of Lodī rulers. 'Abdullah, the author of *Tārīkh-i-Dāūdī*, tells us that in the reign of Sikandar Lodī if a traveller wished to proceed from Delhi to Āgra, one *bahlolī* would, with the greatest ease, suffice for the expenses of himself, his horse and escort. This may be an exaggeration. However, with regard to the unusual cheapness of those times, all contemporary writers are unanimous in their views. We have clear evidence of this cheapness from an unquestionable source. Banārasī, a poet-cum-jeweller of Avadh, of the 16th century, describing his experience of a long stay in Āgra, says that for feeding himself on *kacorīs* (fried loaves) morning and evening regularly for about eight months he had to spend only fourteen rupees, i.e., one rupee and twelve annas per month, or about one anna per day. This is corroborated by the extremely low prices at the time of Akbar. A few items may be cited, by way of illustration—wheat 12 *dāms* per maund of 27½ seers of 80 *tolās* each, wheat flour (fine or coarse) varying between 15 to 22 *dāms* per maund. Rice ranged between 20 to 110 *dāms* per maund, white sugar 128 *dāms* per maund, brown sugar 56 *dāms* per maund, *ghee* 105 *dāms* per maund and salt 16 *dāms* per maund.

It should be noted that these prices were on the whole appreciably lower than those of the Khaljī period, and it is rather interesting that *ghee* was cheaper than white sugar No wonder that *ghee* was consumed in large quantities even by people with limited means. The 17th century saw a substantial rise in the price level. With the prices given in the *Āīn-i-Akbarī* (A.D. 1590) as the base (100), we find that gold had risen to 178 in A.D. 1666, copper to 250 in A.D 1667, wheat to 285 at Āgra in A.D. 1670 (a year of abundant harvests) and Bayāna indigo to 325 in A.D. 1667. In other words, we observe in India an extension of the price revolution which had already taken place in Europe during the preceding century.

Some figures of the wages prevalent at that time may as well be taken for consideration:

Gilkārs (Workers in lime), 5 to 7 *dāms* per day; Carpenters, 2 to 7 *dāms* per day; Bricklayers, 3 to 3½ *dāms* per day.

Ordinary labourer, 2 *dāms* per day; Matchlockmen, 6 rupees (240 *dāms*) per month or 8 *dāms* per day.

Archers, 2½ rupees (100 *dams*) per month or nearly 3½ *dāms* per day.

The few instances adduced above bring out clearly the fact that living was so cheap that the small emoluments of the poorest labourer, were sufficient in normal times to afford him a comfortable life. Low prices were prevalent over the entire orient at that time Manrique saw that a condel of rice (roughly 20 maunds) cost Rs. 3 or at the most Rs. 4. Coryat spent only two pence a day on his journey from Aleppo to Kandahār. Terry remarks that all provisions were so plentiful throughout India that everyone could eat in abundance. All the travellers, from Marco Polo and Chau Ju-Kua in the 13th century to Barbosa and many others in the 16th century, noted the affluence of Indian cities, towns and sea-ports, and the great luxury in which the upper strata of society comprising the ruling class, the nobility, merchants, bankers, jewellers, *jāgīrdārs* and many others lived The descriptions of the dress and ornaments and perfumes used by the people of Gujarāt, Malabār and Vijayanagar as given by Nuniz, Linschoten, Pyrard, Terry, Della Valle and other foreign visitors carry incontestable evidence of the prosperity as also of the culture of the Indian people in that age.

This is not to suggest that luxuries were available to the common man The ordinary middle class comprising the priests, *quādīs* and *mullās*, physicians, and other learned people, traders and tillers of the soil, artisans represented by smiths, potters, carpenters, dyers, confectioners, sculptors, cotton and silk weavers, ivory workers and many others, lived quite comfortably. These classes were generally disposed to be thrifty and therefore financially sound.

Some foreigners have commented on the miserable life of the poorer classes, but this misery was social rather than economic. It was due not so much to poverty as to the humiliation and scorn

to which they were subjected by the parasitic priestly class and their blind followers, among the Hindus. It may also be noted that the high class Muslim converts were also not free from the snobbery of their noble birth and social status. Another major factor which aggravated the misery of the poor people from the beginning of the 16th century was the savage indulgence of the Portuguese in slave trade which they made their chief business. Pyrard and Linschoten have given harrowing accounts of the slave trade at Goa saying, 'they drive slaves as we do horses here'. Slaves were very cheap to buy. Some Portuguese kept scores of male and female slaves and made a living for themselves through their labour and nefarious activities. Many of these slaves had been kidnapped as children while others were prisoners of war.

With regard to the eating habits and tastes of the people, one must take note (as in the matter of clothing) of the climatic conditions and the products of different regions. Abū'l Fazl, who found it impossible to describe the numerous dishes and preparations, set down the recipes for only thirty select dishes of rice, flour and meat. The famous *Bāquarkhānī nān* (bread) and a large number of salt and sweet preparations of Delhi and Āgra are well-known. Terry, in his description of the banquet given to Sir Thomas Roe by Āṣaf Khān, mentions seventy dishes for the guests. There are a number of works such as the *Mānasollāsa* of Someśvara III (A.D. 1126-1138), and *Nuskha-i-Shāhjahānī*, which give detailed recipes of hundreds of kinds of dishes along with the methods of their preparation. A word must be said about *khichrī*, which is regarded by many people as a diet for the poor. There were scores of varieties of this popular preparation and it was one of the richest delicacies for the well-to-do. While *khichrī* was a popular dish in western and northern India, it was appreciated in the South too in a slightly different form. Manrique mentions a more luxurious kind of *khichrī*, called Gujarāti *khichrī*, which was seasoned with various spices and was served at feasts in Bengal. *Ghee* and yellow sugar were available to men of the most ordinary means. Wheat, barley, gram and maize were commonly eaten in north-western India and millets were the favourite of Rājasthān, Gujarāt and Mālwa.

Mukundrāma, a poet of 16th century, tells us about 'confectioners who manufacture sugar and confectionaries of all sorts and some of them go about the towns' selling their preparations to the children.

We need not tarry over the great mansions of the kings and nobles and of the wealthy businessmen in cities and towns. The houses of the middle classes in the cities were constructed mostly of burnt brick. Mud walls, reinforced by a liberal mixture of long grass and jute, were common in the villages all over northern India. The roofs were flat and the wooden rafters and planks were covered with a padding of grass mixed with earth taken from the bed of old pools and tanks because of its special adhesive property. This earth, as it dried, became stone-hard and provided good protection against rain. Bengal and the eastern regions as also the east and west coasts were subject to heavy rain. In these regions a thatched gable roof of long grass with a high ridge at the centre was devised to drain off rain water before it could be absorbed into the roof.

The twin institution of the 'temple' and 'village council' (*Pañcāyat*) shielded the people and enabled them to carry on their normal business of life, without caring for what went on at the top. The main reason of the extraordinary growth of the village councils and the temples as institutions of all-round social service was the indifference and neglect shown by the medieval Hindu rulers in respect of their obligations towards their subjects. The people were left to their own resources for their wider economic and cultural needs. The temple and the village council became the universal instrument for providing society with all that it needed for a happy, healthy and productive life. The village council, together with the various parallel organisations, served to promote the economic welfare of the rural people by giving them protection against exploitation by the government. The temples maintained a good number of employees, patronised scholars and served as seminaries of higher knowledge and the fine arts. They also served as bankers and farmers, daily feeding thousands of people, besides carrying on a variety of religious, educational and cultural activities Under Muslim rule, many mosques also served as seminaries and were generally maintained

by the state. This assumption of vast functions and powers by the village council (*Pañcāyat*) and the temple was not an unmixed blessing. It was only an expedient forged by the genius of the Indian people to fill up the socio-political vacuum resulting from the medieval rulers' neglect of their duties and obligations. These institutions performed their appointed task admirably, but they were the custodians of an essentially static culture.

In such circumstances the economy of the country fell into set patterns and dead formularies While great excellence was attained in certain closed areas and spheres of social husbandry, no new or unorthodox chords were struck, no unbeaten tracks broken, no new inventions or advancement made in any branch of technology. Society became static, simply existing in the image of its past, acquiring no new devices or techniques to face the challenge of the fast advancing progressive nations of the west.

5

Nature of State and Government

IN THE EARLY Vedic period (*c.* 1500-700 B.C.) that of the *Ṛg-Veda Saṁhitā,* the Vedic Aryans, then in occupation of the north-eastern fringe of the Īrānian plateau and the land of the five rivers immediately to its east, were divided into a number of tribes (*janas*). The kings were called after their tribes as in the formula of the priests' announcement of the 'royal sacrificer' to the assembled multitude at the ceremony of royal consecration. Afterwards in the period of the *Yajus Saṁhitās* and the Brāhmanas there emerged, at least among the more advanced peoples, a new type of polity, based on the territorial state. In two *Yajur Veda* texts the king is stated to be the ruler of the *viś* (people) as well as of the *rāṣṭra* (kingdom or royal sway). The three technical terms applied to the king's authority were *rājya* (kingdom or ruling power), *rāṣṭra* and above all, *kṣatra* (temporal power) as opposed to *brahma* (spiritual power). Other texts prescribe the performance of sacrifices whose aim was the submission of the people (*viś*) to their ruler, while forbidding ceremonies that could have the contrary result. Reference is made in a few *Atharva Veda* texts to the king's quasi-divinity. But no claim is made for his divine descent, much less for his divinity. On the contrary, the king's descent from Manu (father of the human race according to Vedic cosmogonic ideas) is pointedly mentioned in a prayer on his behalf The development of the conception of the king's divinity may be traced in the *Yajur Saṁhitās* and the Brāhmaṇas, especially in connection with their description of the three great ceremonies of royal and imperial consecration, the *Aśvamedha,* the *Vājapeya* and the *Rājasūya.* According to these texts, the king not only shares the world of the gods but also enjoys fellowship or sonship or even identity with Prajāpati, the highest deity of the later Vedic pantheon. This conception, nevertheless, was subject to three important limitations. First, the ruler's affinity with the

gods is, according to the views of the authors, a personal distinction acquired by him through his performance of sacrifices. Secondly, the human descent of the king is clearly mentioned in the formula of the king's proclamation to the multitude at the *Rājasūya*. Thirdly, the doctrine of sacrifice in the *Yajus Saṁhitās* and the Brāhmaṇas meant that it was a way of entering into the godhead and even of controlling the gods. The gods themselves, it was held, owed their position to the omnipotent sacrifice. From this it followed that the king's divinity, such as it was, was not peculiar to himself but was shared by him with others equally entitled to the performance of the great sacrifices. A unique text of the *Śatapatha Brāhmana,* however, explains the riddle of "one ruling the many" by the argument that 'he, the Rājanya, is most manifestly of Prajāpati'. Here the king's authority is evidently based upon his divinity without reference to the sacrifice.

The most remarkable feature of the early Vedic polity was the institution of popular assemblies, of which two, namely, the *Sabhā* and the *Samiti* deserve special mention. Amid the obscurity of the texts and their inconclusive interpretations by scholars, we may draw the following general conclusions about the constitution and functions of these bodies: the *Samiti* was the Vedic tribal or folk assembly *par excellence,* which at least occasionally exercised the right of electing the king, while the *Sabhā* was, from the outset, a more limited body with judicial functions. Both the *Samiti* and the *Sabhā* enjoyed the right of debate—a privilege perhaps unknown to the popular assemblies of other ancient peoples. In the later Vedic period, the *Samiti* disappeared as a popular assembly while the *Sabhā* became a narrow body corresponding to the king's privy council and court.

The view that the Vedic kingship was a constitutional monarchy or a public trust, is not warranted by facts. The Vedic king's authority, however, was subject to some important limitations. The old Vedic concept of an omnipotent divine law (*vrāta* or *dhāman*) and custom (*dharma* or *dharman*) must have operated as a moral, though not as a constitutional, check on the king's authority. Moreover, the princes and nobles and the officials called *Sūtas* and *Grāmanīs* who are styled king-makers in two *Śatapatha Brāhmana* texts, together with the popular assemblies,

must have collectively exercised a large, although undefined, measure of influence over the king's administration As regards the influence of the Brāhmanas, it is true that a fundamental principle of the Vedic polity is the separation of the temporal power (*kṣatra*) from the spiritual power (*brahma*) Nevertheless, it is probably correct to state that while the Vedic relationship of *brahma* to *kṣatra* anticipated by many centuries the relation between the Church and the State in Europe, the Brahmanical order lacking the strength of organization of the Roman Catholic Church and also its will to power, failed to establish what its counterpart did at some time or other i.e., an effective control over the temporal power. In the office of the *Purohita* or the king's domestic chaplain, the Brāhmanas would seem to have found a pillar of their strength, for he was regarded from the first as the necessary adjunct of the king, and in fact was regarded as 'the protector of the realm'. From some later Vedic texts, however, we learn that the *Purohita* could be in danger of losing his position owing to the tyranny or caprice of his patron. We may reasonably infer that such influence as was exercised by the *Purohita* over the king depended more upon his personality than upon the established law and usage.

Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan Periods (c. 700-185 B.C.)

At the time of the rise of Buddhism a chain of such states extended over the Indo-Gaṅgā plain and the Mālwa tableland. These states, which had a more or less fixed territory and capital, were commemorated in some earlier Buddhist and Jaina canonical texts in a conventional list of sixteen great political organizations (*mahājanapadas*). The states were of two principal types—monarchical and republican. Shortly after the rise of Buddhism, the chief monarchies conquered the smaller kingdoms and republics, and were eventually themselves absorbed in the empire of the Nandas, the predecessors of the Imperial Mauryas

The pre-Mauryan period marked the first great epoch of organized state administration in Indian history We may trace this advance in the branches of political, economic and military organization of the state. It will suffice to describe very briefly

the first of these branches. One important aspect of state policy was the promotion of public security and welfare. According to the Dharma Sūtras and the *Arthaśāstra,* it is the duty of the king to ensure the security and welfare of the subjects. To begin with, he is charged with the distinctive duty *(dharma)* of protecting all creatures. Not only does the state law contain clauses for the security of the person and property of the subjects, but the king is also made personally responsible for the restoration of the stolen property or its value to the owner. In the Dharma Sūtras the king is the guardian of minors, infants and persons unfit to transact legal business, as well as the custodian of lost and ownerless property. As regards the policy of public welfare, the king in the Dharma Sūtras is required to provide food, shelter and clothing for the needy, especially at his guest-house at the capital.

Kautilya lays down a comprehensive programme of state relief against providential calamities which are classified under eight heads, namely, fire, flood, disease and famine, as well as pests like rats, ferocious animals and snakes and even the visitations of demons. A strikinkly original feature of the state administration in Kautilya's work is its policy of promotion of public health. This involves a ban on unwholesome food and drink and a strict control over physicians in the interest of patients as well as state provision for medical treatment of the afflicted people at the outbreak of diseases and epidemics. Another notable characteristic of administration is illustrated by the measures for protecting the public against the dishonest dealings of artisans and traders. In the Dharma Sūtras, not only are certain classes of persons, including the poor and the infirm, exempted from taxation, but some select categories are also entitled to state relief.

The above evidence is partly corroborated and partly negatived by the stories in the Jātakas, which give us a truer picture of contemporary life We have stories of kings who sought, in accordance with the ideas and superstitions of the time, to relieve their subjects from the calamities of drought and famine. We are also told how good kings used to construct alms-houses *(dānaśālās,* literally 'halls of charity') at their capitals for the

benefit of the public A few stories tell us how kings strove to promote the welfare of their subjects on canonical lines. On the other hand there are a large number of stories indicating the insecurity of life and property of the subjects under the rule of capricious and tyrannical kings.

An important branch of state administration noticed for the first time in this period relates to the security and progress of the state. In the first place, Kauṭilya mentions measures for securing the king's personal safety, particularly, against the danger of disaffection of princes, for launching mass propaganda through the agency of spies in order to guard against the enemy's intrigues and to seduce the enemy's subjects and for suppressing the enemies of the state Secondly, he describes measures for planned colonization of waste lands; for acquiring control over military and political groups called *saṅghas;* and those for attainment of the fundamental objective of progress (*vṛddhi*) in the branch of inter-state relations

The most dominant aspect of society and state in the Dharma Sūtras is the organization of both on the orthodox Brahmanical pattern. In these works, the Brāhmanas are given a number of immunities and privileges including exemption from corporal punishment and immunity from taxation, while the Śūdras are subjected to grievous disabilities The impact of the Brahmanical pattern state, as it may be called, is strongly felt in Kautilya's account of state administration A strong reaction against the Brahmanical social pattern is noticeable in the texts of the early Jaina and Buddhist literature. But we have only passing and scattered references to the influences of this reaction in the branches of law and polity.

We now turn to the second type of polity marking the epoch of the rise of Buddhism. In the records of these and later times, the titles *saṅgha* and *gaṇa* are often applied in a general sense to republican constitutions In reality, these terms constitute a genus including the species of religious, economic, military and political units. We can distinguish two periods of the rise and fall of republics in the history of the pre-Mauryan age. Sometime before the rise of Jainism and Buddhism, a number of republics, of which the Licchavīs and the Mallas were the most

important, came into prominence along the middle and upper basin of the Gaṅgā. But in a short time they were absorbed in the larger kingdoms like Magadha and Kosala. Further, the land of the five rivers was split up after the decline of the Achaemenid power in that area into a number of republics and monarchies, which flourished till they were conquered by Alexander of Macedon. As regards the republics of the first period, we may conclude from a careful study of the relevant texts of the early Buddhist literature that they were ruled by clans of the Ksatriya caste who formed an aristocracy of birth. Their constitution consisted of a sovereign popular assembly and an elected chief (*Senāpati*) or group of chiefs (*Prāmokkhas* or *Mukhyas*) From the evidence of the most authentic Buddhist canonical texts, the Śākyas of Kapilavastu appear to have possessed a hereditary ruler and an assembly of the ruling Ksatriya caste. This was evidently a mixed constitution of monarchical and aristocratic elements.

In the period immediately preceding the rise of the Mauryas, we can trace two parallel movements in the political history of India. In the Gaṅgā basin and the Mālwa tableland the large states were absorbed into the dominion of the Nandas, which paved the way for the imperial dominion of the Mauryas. On the other hand, the Indus valley, which fell for a time under the yoke of the Achaemenids of Irān, was split up into a number of independent states, monarchical as well as republican These flourished till they were overthrown by Alexander.

Our knowledge of the states and governments of the Indus valley on the eve of Alexander's invasion is derived from the first-hand observations of the officers (called Companions) of the great conqueror, which have been preserved in the works of later classical writers. The monarchies were of two types, the normal type ruled by a king, and the unusual type (represented by the solitary example of Patalene in the Sindhu delta) which was ruled by two hereditary kings of different houses holding supreme command in war and a council of elders possessing supreme power. The republics were also of two types, the common type of aristocracies and democracies (peculiar to the Abastinoi). The constitution of the republics comprised a sovereign assembly which had the

right of making war and peace and negotiating with foreign powers, a supreme magistrate and probably also a council of advisers or elders. To judge from the testimony even of the hostile Greeks, some of the Indus valley states achieved a high degree of equity and justice in their administration. Such were the kingdoms of the Sophytes in the Salt Range of the Punjab and of the Mousikanos in the lower Indus valley. These states seem likewise to have undertaken new experiments in the branch of general administration. In the kingdom of the Sophytes and the republic of the Abastinoi (Ambasthas) the Government controlled the upbringing of children so as to weed out the weak and the infirm. A unique feature of the kingdom of the Mousikanos was the absence of slaves

The liberation of the Indus valley from the Macedonian yoke by Candragupta Maurya, and the completion of political unity of the country under his successors, led to the creation of the first all India empire with frontiers reaching out almost to its natural boundaries in the east and south and extending beyond the north-west. By the time of Aśoka the empire was divided into four provinces with headquarters at Takṣaśilā, Ujjayinī, Tosalī and Suvarnagiri in North-western, Western, Eastern and Southern India respectively. The home province was under the direct administration of the emperor. The Mauryas attempted to integrate the regions and peoples of their far-flung empire by such measures as the creation of a highly centralized administration under the rule of the emperor and his officials, the appointment of Mauryan princes as viceroys at the head of the provincial administration, the creation of a kind of Koine (lingua franca), the so-called 'Monumental Prākrt' as the official language of their empire, as well as the adoption of Brāhmī as its official script for the most part, and finally the wise policy of granting autonomy to many dependent peoples The Mauryas continued the old policy of promotion of public safety and welfare. From the Girnār rock inscription of Rudradāman, the Śaka ruler of Western India in the 2nd century A.D., we learn that a big irrigation lake was constructed in that remote region of the Mauryan empire by the provincial governor under Candragupta Maurya and that it was repaired by the local authority in the reign of Aśoka. The welfare measures of Aśoka after his conversion to Buddhism mark an

epoch not only in the history of ancient India, but also of the ancient world. These comprised, first, planting of trees along the roads, digging of wells, and making arrangements for the treatment of men and beasts—this is the earliest reference to state hospitals; secondly, inculcation of virtuous living among the people in accordance with the emperor's Law of Piety; thirdly, similar inculcation of a kind of religious syncretism based on appreciation of the common ethical values of all popular faiths of the time; and fourthly, the protection of animal life. Great care was taken for the maintenance of routes and communications. The rural officials (Agronomoi) of Candragupta Maurya's administration were required, according to Megasthenes, to mark the roads by pillars at regular distances of 10 *stadia.* A 'royal road' connected Puskalāvatī beyond the Sindhu river with Pāṭaliputra, the imperial capital. It would thus seem that the Indians under Mauryan rule ranked among the great road building nations of the world.

Pre-Gupta and Gupta Periods (*c.* 185 B.C.-A.D. 700)

The break up of the Mauryan empire was followed by the rise of regional powers, viz., the Śungas in the Gaṅgā basin, the Sātavāhanas in Western India, and for a time, the Cetas of the eastern seaboard. To this period we may assign the beginning of the institution of powerful feudatories which was destined to assume dangerous proportions from the late Gupta period onwards. The Śuṅga feudatories occupied a position little short of independence, since they struck coins in their own names and sometimes assumed even royal titles. The great feudatories of the Sātavāhanas ruled as kings over large territories, while others were known by the distinctive titles of *Mahārathīs* and *Mahābhojas.* The pre-Gupta age was likewise a period of barbarian invasions and settlements. During this period, many foreign dynasties—Greek, Śaka, and Parthian—ruled over the Indus valley; a branch of the Śakas ruled Western India; and the Great Kuṣānas founded an empire in Northern and Western India. These rulers introduced new royal and administrative titles and principles of state administration after foreign models. What distinguished the Śaka rulers of

Western India from other foreign dynasties of this period was the completeness with which they identified themselves with their Indian subjects. They substituted the indigenous Brāhmī for the foreign Kharosthi in their coin-legends and adopted a largely Sanskritized Prākṛt in place of the old undiluted Prākrt for their official records Usavadāta, son-in-law of Nahapāna (the greatest ruler of the first satrapy), distributed his charities impartially among the Brāhmaṇa laity and the Buddhist monks, thus assuming the role of the Indian princely patron of learning and piety at its best Rudradāman, the greatest ruler of the second satrapy, chose to be remembered in his famous Girnār inscription as a model king after Indian standards.

The Guptas founded the first great indigenous empire after the period of barbarian invasions and settlements in Northern and Western India following the collapse of the Imperial Mauryas. They not only reunited the most fertile and prosperous regions under a single rule, but also completed their emancipation from foreign yoke. According to the contemporary Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fa-hien, the people in the Gupta dominions enjoyed the blessings of peace and prosperity. Fa-hien begins his account of the 'Middle Kingdom' (Chinese designation of Madhyadeśa comprising the area of the Gupta empire) with the observation that capital punishment was unknown and crimes were punished with fines. He also notes that the revenues of the Gupta empire were mainly derived from the king's share of the agricultural produce. The result of this beneficent administration of the Guptas was evident in the condition of the people. Speaking of the people of the 'Middle Kingdom', Fa-hien states that they were 'numerous and happy'. The Guptas also patronized learning by the construction of more buildings (with endowments for their maintenance) at the great Buddhist monastic university of Nālandā, while their care for public works was shown by their restoration of the famous artificial lake at Girnār during the reign of Skandagupta. In short, the administration in ancient India was at its best under the Guptas.

The downfall of the Gupta empire was partly due to the invasions of the barbarian Hūnas under Toramāna and his son and successor Mihirakula, and partly, to the assertion of independence

by its vassal chiefs. The ascendancy of the feudatories in the history of ancient Indian states dates from the later Gupta period. In contrast to the feudal system of medieval Europe, however, the king was not regarded as the sole owner of the soil and the practice of sub-infeudation did not assume great proportions.

The period of decline and fall of the Gupta empire was marked by the rise of new powers in Northern India, such as the Hūṇa Toramāṇa and his son and successor Mihirakula, Yaśodharman of Mālava, Īśānavarman of the Maukhari dynasty of the modern Uttar Pradesh and Śaśānka of Bengal. But none of them succeeded in building up a lasting empire. In the first half of the 7th century, king Harṣavardhana (*c.* A.D. 606-47) of the house of Thāneśvar and Kannauj emerged as the most powerful ruler in Northern India. The contemporary Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hiuen Tsang gives high praise to Harṣa for his love of justice, his unremitting industry in the discharge of his duties, and his piety and popularity. The king, we are told, undertook incessant tours for the inspection of his dominion, built rest-houses for travellers, and erected *stūpas* and monasteries throughout his kingdom. He distributed all his accumulated treasures among his subjects at the great quinquennial assemblies at Prayāga. We also owe to this illustrious pilgrim a general account of the system of Indian administration at the time of his visit (A.D. 629-45). The ruling class of Ksatriyas, we read, was guided by the standards of benevolence and mercy, taxation was light, forced labour was used sparingly, and families were not required to be registered. On the other hand, the penal law was marked by a certain degree of harshness in strong contrast to exceptional mildness under the Imperial Guptas.

Post-Gupta Period (c. A.D. 700-1200)

In the interval between the death of Harsa and the Muslim conquest, the stage of North Indian history was dominated by a few ruling houses—the Imperial Pratihāras of Kannauj and their successors, the Gāhadavālas of Kannauj, the Kalacuris of Cedi, the Candellas of Jejākabhukti, the Paramāras of Mālava, the Caulukyas of Gujarāt and the Cāhamānas of Śākambharī and

Ajmer. To them we owe the institution of the clan-monarchies, which afterwards became the distinctive feature of the polity of the states of Rājputānā. In this type of polity, the king reserved for himself the central part of his kingdom and distributed the rest among other clan-chiefs. In other respects the Rājpūt dynasties followed the Gupta pattern of Government. The rulers assumed the usual imperial titles to which a number of other titles—*Aśvapati, Gajapati, Narapati* and *Rājatrayādhipati* (lord of horses, elephants, men and three grades of kings) — were added by the Kalacuris and the Gāhaḍavālas. The dominions directly administered by the ruler were split into provinces and their subdivisions; these were administered by appropriate state officers. The villages were administered by traditional headmen. The efficiency of the administration of the Pratihāras is proved by the testimony of an Arab writer, who states that no part of India was more safe from robbers than the Pratihāra dominion. The downfall of the Rājpūt dynasties was brought about chiefly by the devastating invasions of Sulṭān Mahmūd of Ghaznī in the first quarter of the 11th century and those of Shihābu'd-dīn Muḥammad Ghurī and his able lieutenant Quṭbu'd-dīn Aibak in the last decade of the 12th and the early years of the 13th centuries. These invasions led to the establishment of the first Muslim empire of Northern India under the Turkish Sulṭāns of Delhi.

In Eastern India the leading powers of this period were the dynasties of the Pālas and their successors, the Senas. The Pāla dynasty had a unique beginning as its founder was chosen by the leading people for the purpose of ending anarchy. This attempt was barren of constitutional results, probably because of the absence of a permanent and regularly constituted council of ministers or similar bodies at the time. In fact, the Pāla administration followed the current pattern of personal rule by a monarch supported by a bureaucracy. A great blow was struck at the power of the Pālas by the successful rising of the Kaivarta chief Divya in North Bengal against the oppressive ruler Mahīpāla I. The final downfall of the dynasty was due to the rise of powerful feudatory families headed by the Senas. The Senas belonged to a family of Brāhmaṇas who had adopted the occupations of Kṣatriyas; they came from the region of Karṇāṭaka

in the South. The Sena capital in West Bengal (Nadia) was captured and territory in North Bengal was occupied by Muhammad Bakhtyār, an able adventurer in the service of Aibak.

In the Deccan the leading powers of the post-Gupta period were the Rāṣṭrakūṭas of Mānyakheṭa and their successors the Cālukyas of Kalyāṇa. Able and ambitious rulers of these dynasties, like Indra III of the former and Vikramāditya VI of the latter, took a leading part in the struggle for ascendancy among the powers of North and South India. Yet the great feudatories of these dynasties enjoyed a position of semi-independence. They waged war on behalf of the paramount power, assigned taxes and alienated lands on their own authority. The feudatories had often sub-feudatories holding seigniories (*manneyas*) under them, these last being sometimes in possession of the same family for several generations. The feudatories and even the holders of *manneyas* had sufficient authority to assign lands freely. The bilingual inscriptions of these dynasties in Sanskrit and Kannaḍa testify to their attempt to recognize Kannaḍa as official language while maintaining the age-old position of Sanskrit as the common language of sacred and secular literature throughout India.

During the post-Gupta period the paramount position in South India was held by the Pāndyas and the Coḷas. The strength of their political and military organization is proved by the extensive conquests of their greatest rulers like Rājarāja I and his famous son Rājendra I. They made themselves masters not only of the whole of South India and the territories immediately to its north along the eastern and western seaboards but also of the Śailendra empire comprising the Malaya Peninsula and Sumatra. The Pāṇḍyas and the Coḷas issued bilingual inscriptions in Sanskrit and Tamil on a wider scale than the contemporary Deccan powers. Thus they sought to reconcile the claims of the regional language with those of the common literary language of the country.

6

Administrative Organization

THE ELEMENTS OF state administration signifying rule by a king with the help of his advisers or assistants may be traced back to the early Vedic period (*c.* 1500-700 B.C.). In *Ṛg-Veda* the king is called *gopā janasya* or protector of the people. This implies that he was charged with the maintenance of law and order. Like his divine prototype Varuna, he employed the agency of spies for this purpose. There is no reference in the *Ṛg-Veda* and the *Atharva Veda* to the king's administration of justice. In two passages of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* reference is made to the king's *Jyaiṣṭhya* or lordship and the epithet *Dharmapati* or 'lord of the law' is applied to him. This probably indicates the king's supreme executive authority as well as the supremacy of the king's justice over all other jurisdictions. The king levied contributions (*bali*) on his subjects. These probably consisted of a share of the agricultural produce as also of the livestock of the villagers. To judge from the position of the Vedic Aryans as strangers in the midst of a conquered population, the king must have been the leader of the tribal host in time of war. It is significant that Indra, the most characteristic deity of the Vedic pantheon, is figured essentially as the god of war. The title *Senānī* mentioned in the *Ṛg-Veda* shows that the military administration was separated from the civil even at that time. The Vedic administration was based largely on the household system. The *Senānī* (commander-in-chief) as well as the *Sūta* (charioteer), *Grāmaṇī* (village headman), *Kṣattṛ* (chamberlain) and the *Saṁgrahītṛ* (treasurer) are included in the list of *Ratnins* (jewelbearers) at whose residences the king made offerings to various deities at the *Rājasūya*. A hundred selected sons of *Sūtas* and of *Grāmaṇīs* are included among the guardians of the sacrificial horse, and one hundred daughters or wives of these officers are mentioned among the attendants of the queen at the *Aśvamedha*. The *Sūta* and the *Grāmaṇī* are

included in the texts of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in the class of non-royal king-makers (*arājāno rājakṛtāḥ*) immediately after the *Rājanyas* or nobles who were the royal king-makers. But we are left completely in the dark about the significance of this description.

Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan Periods (*c* 700-185 B.C.)

We do not know much about the pre-Mauryan administration. However, in view of what we know of the Mauryan period, it can be surmized that the pre-Mauryan period was marked by the establishment, at least in the politically advanced areas, of a strong centralized administration under the headship of the king. This was based upon the two pillars of administration, a permanent revenue and a standing army. The king, moreover, is described in the records of this period as exercising the supreme executive, judicial and military authority over the kingdom. The creation of a regular administrative service consisting of civil and military officials with more or less well-defined functions is another characteristic of the pre-Mauryan period. The officials are described by such generic terms as *Amātyas* (*Amāccas* in Pāli) and Mahmātras (Pāli, *Mahāmāttas*) A complete demarcation between the king's household and general administration is clearly made in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* But traces of the old Vedic tradition of household administration are still found in the Jātakas Like the early Arthaśāstra writers, Kautilya lays down rules for the recruitment of officials and their selection for specialized posts. The state officials along with members of the royal family and household are included by Kautilya in the consolidated civil list of the king, which groups them in categories with cash salaries fixed for each grade. In the early Buddhist texts, we are told about various categories of officials, such as those in charge of the army, judicial administration, the king's harem, and superintendence of public works. They even decided questions of royal succession in case of incapacity or minority or default of an heir to the throne. We have stories of individual ministers exercising a commanding influence in affairs of state in spite of the difficulties caused by their capricious masters. Kauṭilya contem-

plates the king consulting not only his high ministers (*Mantrins*), but in emergencies his Council of Ministers (*Mantri-pariṣad*) as well. And yet the ministers remain merely the king's advisory body, the decision on affairs of state being left entirely to his discretion. We have not a single instance in the records of this period of the king's decision being opposed or even debated by the ministers. The highest ranks in the official hierarchy are occupied, both in the systematic account of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* and in scattered notices of the Pāli canon and the Jātakas, by the Crown Prince (*Yuvarāja* or *Uparāja*), the king's domestic chaplain (*Purohita*), the military commander (*Senāpatī*) and the minister (*Mantrin*).

A striking innovation in state administration during this period was the system of state registers and records as outlined in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. A state register of various items of the king's internal and foreign administration, we are told, was to be prepared by the officer in charge of the Records and Public Accounts office (*Akṣapaṭalādhyakṣa*). Evidently, in the light of these data the *Samāhartā* (Collector-General) prepared his register of villages recording the revenues and other dues payable by the villagers. A census of the rural area enumerating details of tenements and families was prepared, in the first instance, by the rural *Gopa* or officer in charge of 5 or 10 villages. The urban *Gopa* who held charge of 10, 20, or 40 families similarly prepared for his area a census relating to the number of residents, their names and occupations, and their income and expenditure. It is reasonable to infer that this aspect of the Kauṭilyan state administration reflected the practice of the most advanced states of the time. Another important innovation of this period was the creation of a state postal service consisting of *Dūtas* or messengers, who are included by Kautilya is the king's civil list. References are found in the Jātaka stories to female carrier-birds employed by kings for conveying messages. The use of official seals by the king and high officials in attribubed to this period.

The pre-Mauryan period is the age of the first system of state law and justice in Indian history. This system is contained in the extant Dharma Sūtras and in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya, the latter being the only completely preserved specimen of this branch

of Indian literature. The state law is derived in the Dharma Sūtras from a two-fold source, namely, the sacred canon (with its auxiliaries) and approved custom. According to the fuller enumeration in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, the sources of the state law are the sacred canon, current law, usage and reason. The law codes of the Dharma Sūtras and the *Arthaśāstra* were considered to be binding on all sections of the Aryan community. References to the laws of particular states have been preserved only in a few scattered passages of the early Buddhist literature. The customs and practices of regions and villages, of castes and families and of functional groups are clearly recognized as authoritative sources of law in the Dharma Sūtras. The king is credited in Kauṭilya's work with the right of issuing executive orders that had the force of law. But there is no reason to think that this marked a revolutionary step towards royal absolutism since its scope was implicitly or explicitly fixed within well-understood limits.

The beginning of a regular system of state judicial administration may be traced to the pre-Mauryan age. The records of this period recognize the prevalence of the king's justice within his kingdom. The state courts were of two grades: those presided over by the king at his capital and those of the subordinate officers. The king's court was regularly constituted and the Dharma Sūtras state that the king or his substitute was to be assisted by a judge and assessors as well as non-official advisers. Kauṭilya speaks of judges—*Dharmasthas* in the rural areas and *Pauravyavahārikas* in the urban areas. The *Dharmasthas* who sat at the headquarters of 800,400 and 10 villages might have represented three grades of these officers or acted as itinerant judges at the larger and smaller rural centres. They were required to follow strictly judicial procedure, failing which they were liable to various penalties. Early Buddhist literature mentions a class of judicial officers called by different names (*Viniccayamahāmattas, Vohārikamahāmattas* and *Viniccayāmaccas*). References are also found in early Buddhist literature to private courts such as the caste councils (*Sabhā* and *Pariṣad*), the councils of kinsmen (*jñāti*) and the councils of functional groups (*saṅghas*). The caste councils, we are told, decided family disputes, and the other councils probably decided

similar internal disputes among their members. An interesting survival of primitive methods of administration of justice is the judgment by ordeal (*divya* or *samaya*) which is referred to in the Dharma Sūtras. But Kauṭilya, significantly enough, is completely silent about it. The evidence of the Pāli Buddhist texts about the tendencies of state justice is self-contradictory. Some passages in the Pāli canon point to the application of the principle of equality of law for all subjects by the state courts, while others show how criminals were shielded from justice by the king and high officials. In the Jātakas, we read in some stories that kings gave judgments after regular judicial trials, while other stories tell us how the kings passed judgment even in cases of capital punishment after summary trials.

The first institution of state police may be traced to the pre-Mauryan period. Its full development is recorded, as usual, in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, while occasional references are found in other sources. Of the two broad divisions of the regular and the secret police known to records of this period, the former consisted, according to Kauṭilya, of three tiers of officials: the *Pradeṣṭā* (rural) or the *Nāgaraka* (urban) at the top, the rural and urban *Sthānikas* in the middle and the rural and urban *Gopas* at the bottom. In the course of his description of the *Pradeṣṭā's* duties, Kauṭilya tells us how an inquest was held in case of sudden death. This involved a post-mortem examination of the body as well as thorough police investigation of the crime. The use of torture for extorting confessions from suspects whose guilt was established *prima facie* was known. In Kauṭilya's work the secret police is divided into two categories, namely, the peripatetic and the stationary. The secret service men were employed for such varied purposes of general administration as surveillance of the state officials, invigilation of the subjects, suppression of enemies of the state and strengthening of inter-state relations.

Like the institution of the state police that of state jails also begins with the pre-Mauryan period. Stray references to this institution occur in Dharma Sūtras and the Jātakas. A detailed account of jail administration is found in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*.

The earliest system of local government may also be traced to the pre-Mauryan period. The structure of local government

consisted of a parallel machinery for the administration of the rural and urban areas. According to *Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra,* state officials (*Adhyakṣas* or *Adhipas*) were to be appointed by the king for towns and villages with well-defined jurisdictions. In *Viṣṇu Smṛti,* we read that a chain of officials is to be placed by the king in charge of 1, 10 and 100 villages as well as of the whole rural area. According to the fuller account of Kauṭilya, three tiers of officials are to be in charge of the rural as well as the urban area. The *Samāhartā* or the *Pradeṣṭā* was in charge of the *janapada* or the rural area, while each of its four divisions was entrusted to a *Sthānika,* and units of 5 or 10 villages were in charge of *Gopas.* Similarly, the *durga* or the fortified town was entrusted to a *Nāgaraka* and each of its four divisions was left in charge of a *Sthānika,* while units of 10, 20 or 40 families were controlled by the *Gopas.* The officers were primarily concerned with the protection of person and property of the subjects. In the passage of *Viṣṇu Smṛti* referred to above, we read how the village chief failing to suppress troubles within the village is to report to the chief of 10 villages, who in similar circumstances is to report to the chief of 100 villages and the latter to the chief of the rural area. Kauṭilya mentions that the chain of rural officials is to be held individually responsible for protection of merchandize of traders within their respective jurisdictions. In the second place, the *Samāhartā* is required to prepare a register of villages within the kingdom with an abstract statement of the revenues and other dues payable by the villages as well as of the remissions enjoyed by them. Thirdly, Kauṭilya requires benches of three *Dharmasthas* to sit at the headquarters of 800, 400 and 10 villages for deciding civil and criminal suits.

The administration of the village is entrusted in the Dharma Sūtras to the headman appointed by the king In Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra,* different branches of the village administration are controlled by the headman who may have held his office by hereditary succession subject to confirmation by the king. In one Jātaka story, we hear of village assemblies for the transaction of local business functioning even in frontier villages and hamlets. But another story speaks of the sufferings of a body of public spirited villagers at the hands of an unscrupulous local chief.

The administration of towns is entrusted in Kauṭilya's work to the *Nāgaraka*, who corresponds to the *Nagaraguttika* of the Jātakas. From Kautilya's description we learn that he has not only to look after the maintenance of law and order (including the enforcement of curfew regulations), but has also to enforce various building and sanitary regulations and to prepare a census of the citizens.

As regards the contemporary republican constitutions, we learn from a number of references in the Pāli Buddhist texts that the republics were ruled by popular assemblies and elected chiefs. The assemblies consisted of fully qualified members of the ruling aristocracy and their regular meeting place was called the *santhāgāra*. From one story we learn that the assemblies used to discuss momentous issues of state, like surrender to a besieging force, and elected the executive head with complete freedom. From another story (that of Khanda, chief minister of the king of the Videhas who found asylum at Vaiśālī) in a Buddhist Sanskrit work of the Mūlasarvāstivādin school we learn that the assembly exercised the sovereign right of electing the *Senāpati* or the executive head, while the decrees of the republic were issued jointly in the names of the assembly and the *Senāpati*. We have little direct evidence about the procedure of the republican assemblies. From the much discussed parallel with the well-known procedure of the Buddhist ecclesiastical gatherings we may conclude that official proposals were normally brought forward in the form of resolutions which were declared carried, if there was no opposition. The initiative for bringing forward the proposals, however, must have belonged not to an officer specially selected for the occasion but to the chief magistrate or magistrates, while the methods of settlement of disputes must have differed from those of a gathering of monks.

Passing over the administration of the Nandas about which we know very little and that of the contemporary kingdoms and republics of the Indus valley discussed in the preceding section, we may proceed to the period of their immediate successers, namely, the Imperial Mauryas In accordance with the old Indian tradition, the Mauryas appear to have combined in themselves the headship of the civil and the military administration To this

Aśoka appears to have added the headship of the Buddhist Church, if we are to judge from his decree for the expulsion of schismatic Buddhist monks. Aśoka's assumption of the modest title of *Rājan* in contrast to the imperial titles of his Achaemenid predecessors and Hellenistic contemporaries and his avoidance of claim for divine honours adopted by the latter show that he intended his administration to be essentially Indian. The bureaucratic organization of the preceding period appears to have reached its culmination under Mauryan rule. The creation of a distinct class of officials by Candragupta Maurya is reflected in Megasthenes' reference to the Indian caste of 'councillors and advisers' of the king and it is called by the generic title of *Mahāmātras* in Aśoka's inscriptions. At the head of the Mauryan bureaucracy stood the council of ministers. Mauryan historical tradition mentions a number of chief ministers, while Aśoka in his inscriptions makes a pointed reference to the Council of Ministers (*Parisad*). There seems to be no justification for the far-reaching conclusions of some Indian scholars in recent times that the ministers of Aśoka had the right of discussing and even rejecting the emperor's oral orders, of controlling the state funds and of virtually depriving the ruler of his sovereignty in defence of the constitutional laws of the realm. The *Mahāmātras* are divided in Aśoka's inscriptions into various categories, some of which have more or less their equivalents in Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. Aśoka also created the office of *Dharmamahāmātras* for the enforcement of his law of piety.

The Mauryan period fills a gap between two great epochs of law-making activity in ancient times, namely, that of the principal Dharma Sūtra and of the *Arthaśāstra* codes of state law on the one hand and that of Manu's code on the other. The few references in Megasthenes' work to the penalties for offences current in Candragupta's time breathe the spirit of the penal law of the preceding period. From Pillar Edict IV of Aśoka, we learn that even after his conversion to Buddhism he continued the death penalty for crimes, only softening its rigour by giving the convicts three days' respite before execution. The system of state justice of the preceding period appears to have been continued by the Mauryas. From the *Indica* of Megasthenes we learn that Candragupta him-

self sat in the court for hearing suits of the public. The old division of urban and rural judiciary was continued in Aśoka's reign. In his Kaliṅga Rock Edict No. 1, he tells us how he entrusted *Mahāmātras* with the task of invigilation of the town judiciary by means of periodical tours. The few references in the records of the Mauryas point to the continuance of the State police of the preceding period. The branch of regular police is represented by the Indian caste of *Ephors* (inspectors) or *Episkopoi* (over-lookers). Reference to the continuance of the jail administration of the earlier times is found in Pillar Edict V. Here Aśoka mentions that he regularly remitted sentences on each anniversary of his coronation. The *Dharmamahāmātras* are charged in Rock Edict V with the duty of protecting prisoners from molestation and of releasing the deserving ones. These measures reflect the humane spirit of jail administration as outlined in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra.*

The successive creation of large provinces was necessitated by the expansion of the Mauryan empire. By Aśoka's time, as already stated, there were four such provinces, namely, the North-western, Western, and Southern Eastern, with their capitals at Taksaśilā, Ujjayinī, Tosalī and Suvarnagiri respectively. These were ruled by prince-viceroys with the help of local *Mahāmātras*. Officers like the *Yavanarāja* Tusāspha and Pusyagupta, 'the Vaiśya' held charge of subordinate jurisdictions. The old distinction between the rural and urban administration was continued under the Mauryas Megasthenes mentions two categories of officials of Candragupta's administration, namely, the *Agronomoi* (market commissioners) and the *Astynomoi* (city commissioners). The *Astynomoi,* according to Megasthenes, were divided into six Boards of five members each, with distinct functions. Of these, the Board in charge of the foreign residents is an innovation unknown to Kautilya. Equally original is the coordination of the Boards into a corporate body.

Pre-Gupta and Gupta Periods (*c.* 185 B.C.—A.D. 700)

The administration of the Śuṅgas, the heirs to the sovereignty of the Mauryas in the Gaṅgā basin, appears to have been a continuation of their immediate predecessors with a somewhat looser organization than before. Kings were content with the title of

Rājan. Provinces were governed by prince-viceroys with royal titles, and they were assisted by the traditional Council of Ministers (*Mantri-pariṣad*). The Sātavāhanas, while adopting the old royal title of *Rājan*, sometimes added the title *Svāmin* (lord) brought into vogue by their Śaka contemporaries and rivals. The central administration was run by *Amātyas*, who are known to have been employed in executive and financial offices. Military administration was controlled by officers such as the *Senāgopa* equivalent to the old *Senāpati*. The provinces were divided into districts (*ahāras*) which were ruled by *Amātyas* and the villages were in charge of the *Grāmikas* or traditional headmen. Of the Ceta kings of Kaliṅga the most important was Khāravela. He assumed lofty titles unknown even to the Imperial Mauryas and aspired to become a *Cakravartin* (world-ruler) over the neighbouring lands.

The rule of the foreign dynasties of the pre-Gupta period is an important episode in the history of ancient Indian administration. Some of the Indo-Greek kings assumed, after the example of the Seleucids of Western Asia, the title of *Basileus Megalou* (Great King) and followed the practice of appointing the heir-apparent as joint-king over the whole realm. They organized their Indian dominions under provincial governors bearing the Greek titles of *Strategus* and *Meridarch*. The Indo-Greek system of administration was followed on the whole by the Śaka and Parthian rulers of Northern India. But they introduced a new title for provincial governors—*Kṣatrapa*. The Kuṣānas brought with them an exalted conception of monarchy indicated by the new imperial titles on their coin types. They continued the Śaka system of provincial government under *Mahākṣatrapas* and *Kṣatrapas*, while they introduced two new grades of military (or judicial) officers called *Mahādaṇḍanāyakas* and *Daṇḍanāyakas* But the autonomous cities dating from Indo-Greek times ceased to exist under their rule.

The downfall of the Kuṣāna empire paved the way for an after-growth of republican freedom in the Punjab and Rājasthān. Three of these republics are known from their inscriptions or coins or both. These are the Kunindas of the late 2nd and 3rd century A.D., the Yaudheyas of the late 2nd century A.D., and the Mālavas of the interval between the 2nd and the early 4th centuries A.D.

The period of the Imperial Guptas, the Golden Age of ancient

Indian history, was marked by a great exaltation of monarchy They adopted the imperial title of *Mahārājādhirāja* apparently after the model of the foreign rulers of India. From the time of Candragupta II they are described as "equal to the gods Dhanada (Kubera), Varuṇa, Indra and Antaka (Yama)." Their coin types show the nimbus around the king's head. In a number of North Bengal inscriptions they are given a trilogy of titles (*Paramadaivata Paramabhaṭṭāraka Mahārājādhirāja*) which with the slight substitution of *Parameśvara* for *Paramadaivata* became the distinctive designation of paramount rulers in later times.

The Guptas created afresh a system of administration on imperial lines after the downfall of the Mauryan empire. The civil administration apparently was in charge of the *Mantrī* as before. But the supervision of foreign affairs was made over to a new officer called the *Sandhivigrahika* (literally meaning, the minister for war and peace). A number of offices were created with the prefix *mahān* or great. This indicated an upgrading of the old offices or else the institution of a higher order of the same, evidently in keeping with the imperial organization of the administration. A new class of *Amātyas* called the *Kumārāmātyas* comprised not only the high imperial officers but also the officials on the staff of the emperor and the crown prince and those in charge of districts. Three grades of military commands came into existence, namely, those of *Mahābalādhikṛta*, *Mahādaṇḍanāyaka* and *Senāpati*. The cavalry, the elephant corps and perhaps also the infantry were organized under separate commands.

In the branch of provincial administration the Guptas adopted the older models with changed official nomenclature and some striking innovations. The provinces (*bhuktis*) were governed, as in Aśoka's time, by princes or as in the times of the Sātavāhanas, by state officers (*Uparikas*). The districts (*viṣayas*) were ruled by other officers (*Kumārāmātyas*, *Āyuktakas* or *Viṣayapatis*). In North Bengal and probably also in Bihār, as we learn from the contemporary inscriptions, a Municipal Board (*Adhiṣṭhānādhikaraṇa*) or a District Board (*Viṣayādhikaraṇa*) helped the head of the district or the province, as the case might be, in the disposal of government lands. The Municipal Board consisted of four members, namely, the guild-president (*Nagaraśreṣṭhin*), the chief

merchant (*Sārthavāha*), the chief artisan (*Prathamakulika*) and the chief scribe (*Prathamakāyastha*). This marks a bold attempt to associate popular representatives with local administration.

After the Guptas, in Northern India king Harsavardhana (*c.* A.D. 606-47) created a sound and efficient administration of the usual type. He assumed the usual imperial titles and was assisted by the traditional Council of Ministers. The officers of the central government included the Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Mahāsandhivigrahādhikṛta*), the Commander-in-Chief (*Mahābalādhikṛta*), the head of the accounts department (*Mahākṣapaṭalika*), besides others of lesser rank. The kingdom was divided into provinces (*bhuktis*) and districts (*viṣayas*). Village administration appears to have been highly official ridden.

In the Deccan, the administration of the Imperial Cālukyas of Vātāpi (*c.* A.D. 540–753) was marked by the usual characteristics. The kings assumed the familiar imperial titles, the central government was in charge of officers of the old type including a new officer called *Mahāsandhivigrahika* (Minister of Foreign Affairs), the districts were governed by state officers (*Visayapatis*) and the villages were controlled by the headmen (*Grāmakūṭas*) probably in association with the executive body (*Adhikārins*) of the leading householders of the village (*Mahattaras*).

Post-Gupta Period (*c.* A.D. 700-1200)

The administration of the Rājpūt states of Northern India during this period was of the bureaucratic type known at that time. The kings assumed the customary imperial titles, a number of high civil and military officials like the *Mantrī*, *Senāpati*, *Akṣapaṭalika* and *Bhāndāgārika* held charge of the central administration, the provinces and districts called by different names were governed by appropriate officials, and the traditional headmen or the executive body of village elders controlled the administration of the village.

In the Deccan, the Rāstrakūṭas of Mānyakheta and the Cālukyas of Kalyāna successively continued the traditional type of administration under the king and various officers of the central government, who were known by old and new titles. The governors

of provinces and districts were called by different titles, and they enjoyed a position of high authority and dignity. The towns under Rāṣṭrakūṭa rule were in charge of prefects (*Purapatis* or *Nagara-patis*) or sheriffs (*Ur-gāvuṇḍas*), while the villages were controlled by the headmen (*Grāmakūṭas*) and bodies of elders (*Mahattaras*) or else village assemblies (*Mahājanas*). The corporate bodies mentioned above, enjoyed a large measure of self-government. They attested gifts by private individuals, received assignments of local taxes, and made grants of land for pious purposes.

In South India, the administration of the leading powers of this period, namely, the Pāṇḍyas and the Coḷas, was of the standard type with the king and a bureaucracy of high officials controlling the central government. The later Cola and Pāṇḍya kings assumed high imperial titles. Among the latter there was the peculiar institution of joint-kings or co-regents. The office of Prime Minister was known to the Pāṇḍya administration, while the Coḷas had instead a body of executive officials (*Udankuṭṭam*), serving as liaison officers between the king and the bureaucracy. The grant of lands by the Cola kings for pious and charitable purposes involved a highly complex official procedure under the guidance of a chain of officials. A land revenue survey of the whole kingdom was carried out by the great Coḷa emperor Rājarāja I (A.D. 985–1014), and fresh surveys were undertaken by his successors from time to time. Well organized village assemblies with wide powers of self-government functioned under the rule of the Pāndyas and the Coḷas. The village assembly (called *Ur* or *Sabhā*) had an executive body (*Āḷungaṇam*) or various executive committees (*Vāriyams*), the latter being elected by the members according to rules framed by themselves. The assemblies enjoyed such high reputation for integrity and efficiency that they received endowments in cash from kings for pious purposes and were appointed trustees for the proper administration of temple funds. Under Coḷa rule, the assemblies kept their own records of rights and had their own officials for assisting them in their proceedings without sharing in their deliberations. They decided disputes, granted lands, founded and maintained hospitals, took charge of charitable endowments and controlled taxes.

7

Industry, Trade and Commerce

THE BEGINNINGS OF Indian mercantile activities go back to very early times. The scarlet wares portraying landscape with animals on the frieze found at Kulli bear close similarity with pots found in Elam and Mesopotamia, at Ur and Kish. Further, some stone vessels found in Mesopotamia, at Susa in Elam and at Mari, Khafaje, Lagash, and Adab in Sumer, are identical with those found at Kulli. These point to direct trade contact between India and West Asia in Pre-Sargonic times (*c.* 2300 B.C.). It is likely that the bulk of this trade was sea-borne. Archaeological explorations carried out so far indicate that the overland trade-route perhaps did not run further west than the eastern border of Irānian Makrān.

An examination of the various stones and metals used in the Harappan culture-sites would indicate that trade and commerce, inland and foreign, overland, riverine and oceanic was the mainstay of the economy of this civilization. Regarding inland trade, Baluchistān was the source of supply of bitumen, alabaster and probably steatite. Kāthiāwār, Rājasthan and the Deccan provided conch-shells, agates, carnelians, amethysts, jasper, onyx, chalcedony and other stones for beads and also possibly rock crystals. Copper and lead for the smithy were imported from Rājasthān Regarding foreign trade, Afghānistān, Īrān, East Turkestān, Tibet and even Burma supplied semi-precious stones such as jade, turquoise and lapis lazuli. Haematite or red iron oxide used for colouring materials came perhaps from the islands of the Persian Gulf. The discovery of a number of Harappan engraved seals at different sites of Sumer from the Akkadian times (2300–2000 B C.) clearly indicates that Harappan merchants had established trade relations with the Sumerian cities. It is likely that they had their own quarters in those towns A sealing with Indus script, found in Sumer, bears on its back the imprint of coarse cloth.

It may be inferred that cotton goods formed an important item of export from India.

There appears to have existed a number of recognized trade-routes which provided caravanserais for night halts by merchants. Small sites like Amilano in Sind might have acted as such. The clay model of a pack-saddle found at Jhukar indicates that pack-horses, apart from camels were used for transport. Numerous models of ox-carts on wheels show their importance for slower and heavier transport. Riverine and oceanic trade was carried on by boats ; representations of these fitted with prow and stern, mast and steersman have been found on a potsherd and on a seal. Suktagen-dor in Southern Baluchistān and Lothāl in Kāthiāwār would seem to have been important ports of call.

Period of Vedic Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanisads (*c.* 1500-700 B.C.)

The *Ṛg-Veda* refers to the root *Krī* (to purchase) and to merchants (*vaṇij* or *vaṇija*) and also mentions haggling in the market. The *Atharva Veda* mentions garments (*dūrśa*), coverlets (*pavasta*) and goat-skin (*ajina*) as articles of trade. It also contains prayers to Indra for protection against ill-will, wild beasts and highway robbers. It further mentions sale (*vikraya*), barter (*prapaṇa*) and exchange of merchandise (*pratipaṇa*). Invested capital was called *dhāna.*

It is a moot question whether the Vedic Aryans knew the sea. The *Ṛg-Veda* mentions *samudra* which might signify either the lower course of the Sindhu or the sea. The references to Varuṇa's knowledge of the sea-routes (*samudriyaḥ*), Bhujyu's shipwreck and consequent rescue by the Aśvins with a vessel of one hundred oars (*śatāritra*) and the legend of Dīrghatamas, etc., clearly allude to maritime trade. Archaeological evidence of the use of indigo in the clothes of the Egyptian mummies, Indian cedar in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, and Indian teak in the temple of the Moon-God at Ur perhaps shows the continuity of Indian commercial relations with West Asia even in the post-Harappan period. It may be noted that the Panis who constituted the niggardly merchant class in the *Ṛg-Veda* have been identified

or associated with the Bekanāṭas (probably Babylonians). So it would appear that foreign merchants had their settlements in India in the *Ṛg-Vedic* period.

Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan Periods (*c.* **700-185 B.C.**)

Early Buddhist canonical literature gives a detailed account of commercial activities. The Buddhist texts refer to a few trunk and ancillary trade-routes. The north-south trunk route ran from Sāvatthi to Patiṭṭhāna (Paithan) with six intermediate halting stations including Māhissatī (Māhiṣmatī), Ujjenī (Ujjain) and Vedisā (Bhīlsa). Another route lay from Sāvatthi to Rajagaha (Rājgīr) across the Gaṅgā north of Vesālī (Vaiśālī), stopping at important towns *en route*, of which mention may be made of Kapilavatthu (Kapilavastu), Kuśinārā, Pāvā, Pataliputta (Pāṭaliputra) and Nālandā. It was possibly extended upto Gayā. From this main road branched off roads to connect Patiṭṭhāna and Ujjenī with Bharukaccha (Broach, a western sea-port) as well as Avantī with Kosala, Vidarbha and Cedi. The southwest-southeast road ran from Tāmralipti to Bharukaccha. The east-west route in pre-Buddhist days connected Magadha with Sauvīra upto Roruka situated somewhere on the Gulf of Kutch. It ran from Pāṭaliputra to the mouth of the Sindhu and through Īrān further west.

In pre-Mauryan days there existed the Videha-Gandhāra road connecting Mithilā, Śākala, Takṣaśilā and Puskalāvatī. The road extended in the south-east from Mithilā to Campā. The southwest-northwest route connected Bharukaccha with Gandhāra upto Puskalāvatī and continued further to meet Kaśyapapura (in Kashmīr), Paropanisus (Hindu Kush), Kābul and Scythia. The exact course of this route is not known. It is along the east-west route that merchants referred to in the Jātakas frequently travelled. The Campā-Śākala route was used by the *Seṭṭhi* with 500 wagons trailing along the foot of the Himālayas between Pāṭiliputra and Kajaṅgala. Horse-dealers from Uttarāpatha also took this road to come to the market of Vārānasi.

Buddhist texts reveal that merchants (*Sātthavāha*) were organized under a *Jeṭṭhaka* or *Pamukha*. They took their merchandise in caravans (the conventional figure being 500) which were guided

by the land pilots (*Thala-niyyāmakas*) and protected by armed bands. From Bharukaccha, Śūrpāraka, and Tāmralipti a number of merchants (the conventional figure being 700) used to charter a ship and set sail for Suvarṇabhūmi. The ship was guided by a pilot (*Jala-niyyāmaka*). The sun and the stars were means of determining the direction. Birds (*diśākāka*) were employed to find out if land was near.

That trade was quite brisk in the early Buddhist period can be surmized from Jātaka stories of persons becoming rich over-night through speculation.

The exploration of the Sindhu by Scylax of Caryanda in the 5th century B.C. led to the opening of new sea-routes. This might have contributed directly to the opulence of the Indian satrapies of the Achaemenid empire. India's regular contact with the West by overland and oceanic routes began after Alexander's invasion.

The reference by Megasthenes to municipal board at Pāṭali-putra dealing with foreigners clearly indicates that many Greeks had flocked to the Mauryan capital, evidently for trade. Sweet wine and figs were the two commodities which Bindusāra asked of his Seleucid contemporary. The Ptolemaic rulers tried to promote direct trade by sea between India and Egypt by construct-ing ports like Berenice and Myos-hormos. But the all sea route had not become very popular. According to Strabo, in the time of the Ptolemy scarcely anyone would venture on this voyage for commerce with the Indies. Regular maritime contact between India and Egypt began after 23 B.C. Indian traders sailed directly to the Somali ports and appeared in Egypt. An inscription found at Redesiya mentions an Indian merchant Sophon, travelling over the caravan route to Coptos. Towards the close of the 1st century B.C. Indo-Egyptian trade increased in volume. Strabo mentions that from the sea-port of Myos-hormos alone about 120 ships sailed for India in one season. Some of the merchants reached even the mouth of the Gaṅgā.

Pre-Gupta and Gupta Periods (*c.* 185 B.C.-A.D. 700)

From about the middle of the 1st century A.D., direct Indo-Roman overseas trade was further accelerated by the discovery

(*c* A.D. 45) of the monsoons by the Graeco-Roman sailors—it was till then a closely guarded Arab secret. Later, the consolidation of the empire by the Kuṣāṇa rulers, who exercised suzerainty over extensive parts of the lower Indus valley and Western India either directly or through their satraps, contributed to the development of this trade. The unrest caused by the extensive race movements from the 2nd century B.C. in Central Asia evidently rendered the old silk-route unsafe and Chinese silk trade with the West was carried on through Indian intermediaries. A graphic account of Indo-Roman trade is preserved in *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* written by an anonymous sailor of Alexandria It describes the Indian ports along with their exports and imports. They are Barbaricum, Barygaza (Broach), Suppara (Sopara), Kalliena (Kalyāna), Semylla, Mandagora, Palaepatmae, Melizeigara, Byzantion, Togarum, Naura, Tyndis, Muziris, Nelcynda, Comari, Colchoi, Poduca, Sopatma, Masalia, and at the mouth of Gaṅgā, a port of the same name. According to the same authority, Indian exports generally consisted of precious and semi-precious stones (diamonds, pearls, sapphires, onyx, sardonyx, agate, carnelian), ivory, cotton cloth called *monakhe* and *sagmatogene,* muslins and mallow cloth, Chinese silk cloth, silk yarn, spices and medicinal products like pepper, nard, spikenard, costus, bdellium, long pepper, and malabathrum. The articles of import at the port of Barygaza included Italian, Laodician and Arabian wines, copper, tin, and lead, coral, topaz, thin clothing, bright coloured girdles, storax, sweet clover, flint glass, realgar, antimony, gold and silver coins as well as costly vessels of silver; singing boys and beautiful maidens were also brought specially for the king.

That India had a favourable balance of trade with the Roman world in the 1st century A.D. is clear from the introduction of gold coinage by Wima Kadphises. Pliny the Elder (*c.* 77 A.D.) bewailed that India and other countries of the Orient drained Rome to the extent of 100 million *sesterces* annually. Inscriptions from Western India (*c.* 2nd century A.D.) mention foreign perfume merchants (*Yavanagandhika*), and it is probable that they had their own quarters in the port towns in Western India Discovery of Arretine vases of such famous Italian potters as

Vivie at Arikamedu-Vīrapaṭṭaṇam (near Pondicherry) proves that it was from *c*. A.D. 30 a prosperous South Indian settlement. At Vīrapaṭṭaṇam there might have been one such factory of Roman merchants. The discovery of a large number of mint-fresh Roman coins issued in the early centuries of the Christian era from extensive regions in South India would show the existence of such merchantile establishments. On the basis of numismatic evidence it has been asserted that this Indo-Roman trade suffered a considerable set back in the days of the Roman Emperor Caracalla (A.D. 217).

The decline of India's trade with Rome was accompanied by the increase of her merchantile relations with the countries of South East Asia. In the early centuries of the Christian era Indian or Indianized states were emerging in Suvarṇabhūmi-Suvarnadvīpa (Malay Peninsula and Indian Archipelago), Kambuja and Campā (Cambodia and Annam). These indirectly testify to the existence of a numerically strong Indian element in the population of the respective countries. Indians visited these countries primarily for trade. Archaeologically it can be shown that Vīrapaṭṭaṇam was an *entrepot* for trade between Rome and Thailand and thence Campā and China. Direct Indian contact with China was possibly established at the time of the old Han Dynasty, the annals of which mention a voyage to Huang-che (Kāñcī ?). The discovery of a Chinese coin in Mysore which dubiously bears the date 138 B.C. may also be a proof of maritime trade between India and China in the 2nd century B.C. The report submitted to the emperor by the Chinese envoy K'ang T'ai (*c*. A.D. 250) and the frequent visits of Buddhist missionaries to China for proselytization from the beginning of the Christian era also point to the same conclusion. Overland trade between India and China would also seem to have flourished, and the *vihāras* explored by Sir Aurel Stein in Central Asia perhaps acted as caravanserais for night-halts of merchants, besides providing shelter to monks like Hiuen Tsang. India's internal and foreign trade reached great heights in the Gupta period as is evident from numerous literary references as also from the imperial coins The Chinese pilgrims testify to regular commercial intercourse in the 4th and 7th

centuries between Tāmralipti (South Bengal) and Indonesia and Indo-China.

Post-Gupta Period (*c.* A.D. 700-1200)

In the post-Gupta period the sea route to China was quite well-known, as is evident from Hiuen Tsang's voyage to China.

In the Deccan, the Rāṣṭrakūṭas must have derived large revenues from the major ports of Broach and Kalyāna as also from the minor ports of Naosari, Sopara, Thana, Saimur, Dabhoi, Jayagad, Devagad and Malvan, which carried on a regular coastal trade. The volume and economic significance of coastal trading will be clear from the Kharepatan Plates of Anantadeva (10th century A.D.) which state that import duty on coastal trade was less than that on foreign trade. But this does not mean that foreign trade had dwindled, since Al-Idrīsī informs us that ships from China and Īrān used to call at Broach regularly. With the decline of the Rāṣṭrakūta power, it appears that Īrānian trade was diverted to Cambay, a more northerly port then in possession of the Gurjara-Pratihāras. The principal articles of export appear to have been cotton yarn and cloth, muslins (both rough and fine), hides, perfumes and frankincense, cocoanuts, sandal and teak-wood, and ivory. In all likelihood diamonds formed an item of export, but there was possibly an embargo on the export of bigger diamonds. Imports to ports in Western India remained more or less the same as in the days of the *Periplus*. Marco Polo informs us that Thana imported gold, silver and copper from the West Asia in the 13th century. Import of horses from Arabia was also large.

The inscriptions of the Gurjara-Pratihāras and their feudatories throw interesting light on the mercantile activities of the people. The merchants are described in these inscriptions as *Vyavahārika*. The inscriptions usually mention two classes—*Ghoṭaka* (horse-dealers) and *Sārthavāha* (caravan traders). The Pehoa inscription (A.D. 882) mentions horse-dealers from different countries. For the sale of each animal they agreed to pay a cess of two *dharaṇas* by the dealer and one by the buyer for the benefit of temples at Kānyakubja, Gotīrtha, Bhojapura (near Kannauj) and Pṛthūdaka

(Pehoa). Similarly the Atavā (Udaipur) inscription (A.D. 953) refers to visits of merchants from Karṇāṭaka, Madhyadeśa, Lāṭa and Ṭakka and the agreements they made to pay a levy on articles of sale. These references prove the corporate character of the mercantile activities. They also point to a brisk highway trade within the country. More important still is the traders' right to levy a cess on all commercial transactions, which were binding even on the state. These prove the large measure of autonomy the merchants enjoyed.

8

General Economic Conditions

OUR KNOWLEDGE OF the economic condition of pre-historic India is still very incomplete. The implements and weapons found at different pre-historic regions and sites in Kashmīr, Soan Valley, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarāt indicate that their makers were food collectors and belonged to the early and late Stone Ages. They used bones and wood along with stones and had no knowledge of metals or of the potter's art.

Some more detailed information may be had from the pre-Mohenjo-daro and pre-Harappa sites in Sind and Baluchistān. The dwellings were those of small village communities. They knew agriculture and made a significant advance in pottery-making. These were polychromed and bore geometric designs, and both black-on-red and buff colours were used.

We are on surer ground when we come to the Indus Civilization which, as recent excavations conclusively prove, was not confined to the Punjab and Sind only, but spread much further in the north-east (Simla hills), east (Alamgirpur, in Uttar Pradesh) and south and south-west (Tāptī-Narmadā valley). Until the Indus script is deciphered, our knowledge of the Indus Civilization will remain incomplete, and our conclusions based on archaeological data would at best be surmises The civilization is known to us only in its mature form, since the remains found in all the strata at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa are of a uniform character.

The Indus Civilization was chalcolithic and urban, as evinced by the remains unearthed at Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Lothāl and other places. Nevertheless, a large number of smaller sites indicate that there were villages upon whose agricultural surplus the towns depended. Among the agricultural products, mention may be made of the bread-wheat, barley, sesame, field-peas and something like the Indian rye. The particular species of cotton grown now-a-days was also cultivated, as may be seen from a

dyed cotton textile piece tied round a silver vase found at Mohenjo-daro.

The towns had walls all around. The streets were straight and broad and intersected one another at right angles. The excellent sanitation system by underground drainage with brick man-hole covers and soak-pits, the so-called College of Priests, the Pillared Hall, the Great Bath with hydropathic arrangements and the multi-storeyed buildings, testify to a high degree of economic progress and engineering skill. Black-on-red wares bearing naturalistic motifs and animal designs are numerous. Polychrome vases are rare. The potter's kilns were situated outside the city walls ; it is only in the last phase that one of these is found at Mohenjo-daro when decadence had gone so far as to result in the slackening of municipal control.

The Indus Civilization was riparian and the rich alluvium carried by the annual flood of the Indus system contributed to the fertility of the soil The large quantity of wood needed as fuel for the kiln-burnt bricks also indicates that the Indus Civilization sites at that time were covered either by the south-west monsoon or by extensions of the Atlantic cyclones. It is not known whether irrigation was in use.

The complex process of manufacture of the artificial substance called faience was known to the Indus people They excelled in the art of metallurgy. The metal smiths manufactured weapons and implements in copper and bronze by the technique of casting and forging. The large number of beads and jewellery unearthed from the important Indus sites indicate that this industry also attained a high degree of excellence. Numerous seals of the Indus people have been found at these sites and some have been recovered even from sites in Mesopotamia and Syria. These indicate the prevalence of private property and trade, both inland and foreign.

There appears to have existed in the Mohenjo-daro-Harappa area, a strong authoritarian central government which regulated the economic life of the people. The graduated system of weights and measures, the granary at Harappa, and even the uniform size of the bricks through all the phases of this culture scattered over hundreds of kilometres, corroborate this. The two-roomed

houses of uniform pattern found both at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa very well resemble the slave-village found at Tell el-Amarna, and as such might have been barracks of the workers or residences of slaves.

Period of Vedic Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanisads (*c.* 1500-700 B.C.)

In contrast to the industrial and commercial outlook of the Indus people, the *Ṛg-Vedic* Aryans were mainly agriculturists. Among the latter, cattle-breeding formed an important occupation, but the agrarian character of their economy can be known from such expressions as *Pañca-kṛṣṭayaḥ* or *Pañca-carsaṇayaḥ*, meaning the five *Ṛg-Vedic* tribes. While private ownership over homestead (*vāstu*) and arable land (*kṣetra, urvarā*) was recognized, the pasture-land was enjoyed in common. Allusions to strips of land (*khilya*) between two fields, epithets like *Kṣetrasya Pati* or *Urvarā Pati*, and the lady Apālā's prayer to Indra for the fertility of her father Atri's field, indicate private ownership of cultivable land. There is no evidence of royal right over all the land in the kingdom. In fact, the king was entitled only to a part of the produce, and as such was called *balihṛt* (collector of *bali*). Land was constantly being reclaimed by clearing the forests. Ploughs were drawn by oxen and then seeds were sown. The harvest (*yava*) was reaped with the sickle (*dātra, śṛṇi*), tied in bundles and threshed on the *khala* (threshing floor). Wheat was separated from chaff with the help of a sieve or winnowing fan, and was then measured with a wooden vessel called *ūrdara*. Agriculture depended on the monsoons, but irrigation with water (*khanitrima āpah*) raised by a pulley (*cakra*) was also known. The agricultural products were generally called *yava, dhāna* or *dhānya*.

Of arts and crafts, the Vedic Indians knew carpentry, spinning and weaving, and tanning of hides. Among the workers in wood, the most important was the chariot-maker (*rathakāra*). The progress of the boat-building industry can be judged from such expressions as *śatāritra nau* (100-oared boat). Words like *vāya* (weaver), *tasara* (shuttle), *vasana, vāsas atka, uṣṇīṣa nīvi, pari-*

dhāna, śāmulya (woollen garments), *peśas* (embroidered garments) show that the weavers made different kinds of cloth. The *carmamna* (tanner) made bags and pots of leather to preserve milk, curd and wine The potter's art was also known. Some archaeologists believe that the Painted Grey Ware recently discovered from various sites in North India was associated with the Vedic Aryans Distillation of wine (*soma* and *surā*) was also practised.

The *Ṛg-Vedic* Aryans used gold for ornaments (*niṣka, hiraṇya-piṇḍa*); *ayas*, which in all likelihood meant copper, was used for making agricultural, household and military equipment like *siprā* (helmet) and *khrgala* (body armour). Silver and iron were in all probability unknown to them.

Division of labour was only beginning and there was no stigma attached to manual labour There was no big landed aristocracy and society consisted of small peasant proprietors. On the whole economic life was very simple. Trade and commerce had not yet interested the Aryans. It is, therefore, unlikely that they had a money economy.

In the later Vedic period some significant changes took place. Details of agricultural operations are given—they comprised tilling, sowing of seeds, reaping of the harvest and winnowing. Among agricultural products the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā* mentions wheat, rice (*vrīhī*), barley, *māṣa, tila, mudga, khalva, priyaṅgu, anuśyāmaka, nīvāra* and *masūra*. Linen (*kṣauma*) and hemp (*śaṇa*) came to be used for the manufacture of garments. Cotton (*kārpāsa*) is first mentioned by Pāṇini.

In the sphere of metallurgy one significant advance was made with the introduction of iron. The later Vedic texts distinguish between *lohitāyas* and *kṛṣṇāyas*, the latter being synonymous with iron.

With the development of agriculture and progress in the economic condition of the people, towns like Āsandīvant, Paricakrā and others came into existence. People in these towns lived by trade and commerce. In the *Atharva Veda* there are prayers and incantations for security and prosperity in trade.

The emergence of a mercantile community led to the introduction of some sort of a stable medium of exchange. In the

Rg-Vedic period the gold *niska*, though generally referring to a necklace, was sometimes used for money. *Niṣka* particularly appears to have had a definite weight. In the later Vedic period gold *Krsnala* and *Śatamāna* came into use. One fourth (*pāda*) of a *Śatamāna* was also known. Pānini mentions stamped (*āhata*) coins such as *Kāṁsya, Śatamāna, Kārṣāpana, Pana, Pāda, Niska, Rūpya*, etc.

Pre-Mauryan and Mauryan Periods (*c.* **700-185 B.C.**)

Recent archaeological explorations at Hastināpura, Ujjayinī, and Delhi (Purānā Qilā) indicate that India stepped into what is called the Iron Age in the second half of the 1st millennium B.C. This enabled the people to reclaim more and more land for cultivation by clearing forests. Agriculture was developed both intensively and extensively. Towns multiplied greatly as may be gathered from the early Buddhist canonical literature. In the towns, industries became more localized and specialized and were organized in guilds. The economic prosperity of the time can be guessed from expressions mentioned in the Jātakas like a farmer owning 1000 *karisas* of land or merchantmen-bankers possessing 80 *kotis* of coins.

The rich farmers were called *Gahapatis* and *Kutumbikas*. They had their land cultivated by hired labourers and even slaves. Irrigation from rivers and canals was practised as before. Fragmentation and subdivision of land were quite common and ordinarily people possessed small plots of land.

The early Buddhist texts mention at least eighteen craft and trade-guilds (*seṇīs*). These included the carpenters, potters, oil-pressers, garland-makers, stone-cutters, ivory-workers, blacksmiths, and jewellers. Certain crafts were localized. Thus Kāśī became famous for its textile industry (Kāśīvattha). Even in a town, different arts and crafts flourished in different quarters. At Vārānasī the ivory-workers (*Dantakāra*) had a street (*vīthi*), and the washermen (*Rañjakāra*) had one at Śrāvastī. There are references to villages of carpenters (*Vaḍḍhakī*), and potters (*Kumbhakāra*) and smiths (*Kammakāra*) around big towns like Vārāṇasī. The conventional numbers of families residing in these settlements are

500 to 1000. Each guild had a *Jeṭṭhaka* (elder) or *Pamukha* (foreman). We also hear of guilds of caravan-drivers (*Sātthavāha*), a professional caste-like group of the time. We also come across terms like *dhānna-vaṇijakula* (family of grain merchants) and *paṇṇikā-kula* (family of green grocers). Traders and artisans were provided with capital by the *mahāseṭṭhis, seṭṭhis* and *anuseṭṭhis*. From certain passages the latter communities appear to have been in active business. Joint stock companies making a profit of 100 per cent or even 300 per cent were not uncommon.

In the Mauryan period, according to Strabo, all land belonged to the king, and peasants, besides paying the land-tax, had to pay tribute. But this is somewhat doubtful. Such distinguishing terms as *svatva, svāmitva,* and *bhoga* definitely indicate that private ownership of land was recognized. Grazing ground, however, might still be considered communal. In Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra* the king is shown to possess lands of which the net produce was called *Sītā,* and new lands were constantly reclaimed and settled under royal supervision. The *Sītādhyakṣa* had these lands cultivated by sharecroppers under different terms and conditions. The free peasant proprietor was to pay to the king one-sixth (*ṣaḍbhāga*) of the annual produce. The Greek writers appear, however, to mention that the quantity was one-fourth. In the Rummindei Pillar Inscription, Aśoka says that he had reduced the amount of *bhāga* to one-eighth as a concession to the people of the holy birth-place of the Buddha.

That the Mauryas had a strong grip over the economic life of the times is evident from the *Arthaśāstra* as also from the accounts of the classical authors. The *Arthaśāstra* refers to state monopoly of mines (*khani*), and the manufacture of salt and wine. According to Megasthenes, ship-building and manufacture of arms were royal monopolies. Slave labour was employed in the mines and factories. The state was also the biggest trader and made arrangements to check adulteration and false declaration of the quality and quantity of the commodities. The state provided for the correctness of weights and measures, sale by public auction and collection of tolls through officials like the *Paṇyādhyaksa, Mudrādhyakṣa, Kosthāgārādhyaksa, Pautavādhyakṣa* and *Śulkādhyakṣa,* all of them working under the *Samāhartā*. Megas-

thenes also refers to six boards of *Astynomoi*, some of which were entrusted with these duties. The quarrying of stones and manufacture, polishing and erection of the huge monolithic pillars of Aśoka in the widely scattered regions of his empire, indicate the stage of technical progress achieved, and the opulence of the government. Kautilya states that construction of dams for purposes of irrigation was a state undertaking. The Girnār Inscription of Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman also confirms this by stating that the Sudarśana lake was originally constructed by Vaiśya Puṣyagupta, Candragupta Maurya's governor of Saurāṣṭra. The dam was repaired later by Aśoka's governor Yavanarāja Tuṣāspha. It was once more repaired by Rudradāman.

The State derived its revenue from seven main heads (*āyaśarīra*) viz., *durga* (fortified towns), *rāṣṭra* (country side), *khani* (mines), *setu* (buildings and gardens), *vana* (forest), *vraja* (herds of cattle), and *vaṇikpatha* (roads of traffic). These were again subdivided into a large number of heads. Megasthenes states that husbandmen paid taxes and tributes (*bhāga* and *bali*), while shepherds and artisans rendered services to government.

Kauṭilya mentions coins of different denominations, the standard currency being *paṇa*. Earlier, the Achaemenid emperors introduced the silver *sigloi* and possibly the gold *daric*. A large number of punch-marked and cast coins of copper and silver have been discovered, but none can be attributed conclusively to the Mauryan period though such a possibility cannot be altogether ignored. Kauṭilya refers to state officers in charge of coinage, the *suvarṇādhyakṣa*, the *lakṣaṇādhyakṣa* and the *rūpadarśaka* on the one hand, and to coins of gold, silver and copper on the other.

Pre-Gupta and Gupta Periods (*c.* 185 B.C.-A.D. 700)

In the post-Mauryan period, the Sātavāhana inscriptions show that there were in Western India at that time guilds which acted as banks. One inscription states that an oil-pressers' guild (*Tailikanikāya*) received two amounts of money as fixed deposit. For one amount the rate of interest payable was 12 per cent and for the other 9 per cent. The huge sacrificial fees (*dakṣiṇā*) paid after the completion of various Vedic rites by Queen Nāganikā

point to a high degree of economic prosperity which must have depended on maritime commerce. The type of Āndhra coins with the figure of a ship on the obverse and the account preserved in *The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea,* all testify to the maritime commerce of the day.

In the early centuries before and after the Christian era the Kuṣāṇa empire touched the fringes of the Roman empire in the west and the 'celestial empire' in the east. Indians acted as the chief intermediaries in the silk trade, besides exporting muslin and spices. Their favourable balance of trade, which Pliny mentions, resulted in the creation of a gold standard in India. Wima Kadphises and his successors issued gold coins, which were in point of shape, size, weight and mineral content exactly similar to Roman *solidus* and *denarius*. People on the Coromandel Coast were engaged in trade with South East Asia. The Jātaka texts, the *Niddeśa,* the *Milinda Pañho,* the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and epigraphic evidence from South East Asia, point to an increasing Indian mercantile enterprise and subsequent political domination in the region.

The decline of the Kusāṇa empire and the Sātavāhana kingdom in the first quarter of the 3rd century A.D. once again let loose the forces of disintegration. Its consequent impact on Indian economy may perhaps be seen in the paucity of Roman gold coins found in India during this period. When the Imperial Guptas established an empire, peace and prosperity returned. The numerous gold, silver and copper coins of the early Guptas found in the different parts of the country are an index to the opulence of the country as a whole. The increase in the weight of their gold coins without debasement further confirms this.

With increasing security of life and property and introduction of a more extensive and intensive cultivation, population multiplied. This meant greater dependence on land. Indeed, land-grants of the period show that agricultural fallow land (*aprada, aprahata*) was not easy to secure. Land tenure rules in this period, as revealed by the inscriptions and Dharma Śāstras, show that alienation of land was a complicated process. Permission of the village and district authorities was necessary for land transaction in North India in the time of the Guptas ; this fact, incidentally,

shows that the Gupta emperors claimed some sort of superior right over individual farmers. Providing irrigation water was mostly the responsibility of the State as may be seen from the repairing of the dam of the Sudarśana lake by Parṇadatta in Skandagupta's reign. Irrigation wells (*vāpī*) also were dug. Though it is likely that the villages were left to themselves as self-sufficient economic units, the prosperity of the country depended on industrial progress. The high level of excellence in metallurgy in this period can be seen from the rust-proof Mehrauli Iron Pillar of king Candra (Candragupta II ?). Industries, as before, were organized under guilds. The Vaiśālī seals refer to the guilds (*nigama, śreṇī*) of bankers (*Śreṣṭhis*), traders (*Sārthavāha*) and artisans (*Kulika*). Specific mention has been made of the guilds of oil pressers (*Tailika*), silk weavers (*Paṭṭavāya-śreṇī*) etc. Each guild had a president called *Prathama* or *Pravara*. Something like a modern chamber of commerce or cartel also existed. There are references to *Śreṣthi-kulika-nigama*. These guilds undertook banking operations and accepted donations to be held in perpetuity (*ājasrikam*) on certain conditions which were registered (*nibaddha*). A guild of the town of Ajapūraka thus received a permanent endowment (*akṣayanīvi*). The endowment funds were trust properties and so the principal (*nīvi*) had to be kept intact. Banking operation was undertaken by temple committees as well, such as the *Pañcamaṇḍalī* of the Kākanādabota-mahāvihāra. The importance of the industrial and mercantile communities in the body politic can be seen in the Advisory Council of the District Magistrate (*Viṣayapati*).

The sources of revenue during this period were many. Of these, mention may be made of the *udraṅga* (probably a land-tax), *uparikara* (a tax levied on cultivators who have no proprietory rights on soil), *bhūta* (what is grown), *dhānya, hiraṇya, bhoga,* and *bhāga* (share of produce). It appears that taxes were levied on salt, sale and purchase, and produce of mines. Forced labour was prevalent (*vaiṣṭika*) and some form of a police-tax (*bhāṭa, cāṭa*) was also levied.

Post-Gupta Period (*c.* A.D. 700-1200).

Economic organization in the Gupta period became the pattern

for the later period. Very little innovation took place. However, the almost simultaneous decline of the Gupta and Roman empires temporarily affected the fortunes of Indian trade and industry. Post-Gupta coins are few, debased and crude, pointing to great economic decline in the country. New markets were, however, being sought. It is likely that Harṣa's embassies to China were not motivated purely by political reasons. The Pallavas and later the Coḷas in the south maintained active maritime trade relations with South East Asia. The Pālas also did not lag behind, as may be inferred from some Kambuja inscriptions using proto-Bengali script and also from the Nālandā copper plate of year 39 of Devapāla. But from about the middle of the 9th century A.D. Indian merchants faced keen competition from the Arabs who monopolized at least the carrying trade of the Arabian Sea. The Arab merchants Sulaimān and Mas'ūdī speak highly of the prosperity of the Pāla, Rāstrakūṭa and Gurjara-Pratihāra kingdoms. Another important feature of economic life in the post-Gupta period was the growing tendency towards feudalisation of land. Numerous grants show that lands were allotted to officials as rewards for military service, or as an obligation for such service. Instances of sub-infeudation of land also are not wanting.

Cola inscriptions at Ukkal and Uttaramerūr show that the villages were self-sufficient. The village assemblies looked after irrigation and collected revenue from the cultivators for the State. Numerous Coḷa coins of gold and copper have been found. Cola inscriptions as well as Chinese annals testify to the extensive maritime activities of the Coḷas. The Coḷa temples and sculptures bear ample testimony to their economic prosperity.

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